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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The First Complete Translation into English

THE THIRTEEN

Ferragus
The Duchesse de Langeais
The Rise and Fall of Cesar Birotteau

Volume Twelve

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS ON THE WOOD
BY FAMOUS FRENCH ARTISTS

New York
PETER FENELON COLLIER & SON
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THE THIRTEEN

PREFACE

In its original form the "Histoire des Treize" consists—or rather, it was originally built up—of three stories: "Ferragus" or "the Rue Soly," "La Duchesse de Langeais" or "Ne touchez-pas à la hache," and "La Fille aux Yeux d'Or." The last, in some respects one of Balzac's most brilliant effects, does not appear here, as it contains things that are inconvenient. It may be noted that he had at one time the audacity to think of calling it "La Femme aux Yeux Rouges."

To tell the truth, there is more power than taste throughout the "Histoire des Treize," and perhaps not very much less unreality than power. Balzac is very much better than Eugène Sue, though Eugène Sue also is better than it is the fashion to think him just now. But he is here, to a certain extent, competing with Sue on the latter's own ground. The notion of the "Dévorants"—of a secret society of men devoted to each other's interests, entirely free from any moral or legal scruple, possessed of considerable means in wealth, ability, and position, all working together, by fair means or foul, for good ends or bad—is, no doubt, rather seducing to the imagination at all times; and it so happened that it was particularly seducing to the imagination of that time. And its example has been powerful since; it gave us Mr. Stevenson's "New Arabian Nights" only, as it were, the other day.

But there is something a little schoolboyish in it; and I do not know that Balzac has succeeded entirely in eliminating this something. The pathos of the death, under persecution, of the innocent Clémence does not entirely make up for the unreasonableness of the whole situation. Nobody

can say that the abominable misconduct of Maulincour—who is a hopeless "cad"—is too much punished, though an Englishman may think that Dr. Johnson's receipt of three or four footmen with cudgels, applied repeatedly and unsparingly, would have been better than elaborately prepared accidents and duels, which were too honorable for a Peeping Tom of this kind; and poisonings, which reduced the avengers to the level of their victim. But the imbroglio is of itself stupid; these fathers who cannot be made known to husbands are mere stage properties, and should never be fetched out of the theatrical lumber-room by literature.

"La Duchesse de Langeais" is, I think, a better story, with more romantic attraction, free from the objections just made to "Ferragus," and furnished with a powerful, if slightly theatrical catastrophe. It is as good as anything that its author has done of the kind, subject to those general considerations of probability and otherwise which have been already hinted at. For those who are not troubled by any such critical reflections, both, no doubt, will be highly satisfactory. And, indeed, I must confess that I should not think much of any boy who, beginning Balzac with the "Histoire des Treize," failed to go rather mad over it. I know there was a time when I used to like it best of all, and thought not merely "Eugénie Grandet," but "Le Père Goriot" (though not the "Peau de Chagrin"), dull in comparison. Some attention, however, must be paid to two remarkable characters, on whom it is quite clear that Balzac expended a great deal of pains, and one of whom he seems to have "caressed," as the French say, with a curious admixture of dislike and admiration.

The first, Bourignard or Ferragus, is, of course, another, though a somewhat minor example—Collin or Vautrin being the chief—of that strange tendency to take intense interest in criminals, which seems to be a pretty constant eccentricity of many human minds, and which laid an extraordinary grasp on the great French writers of Balzac's time. I must confess, though it may sink me very low in some eyes, that

I have never been able fully to appreciate the attractions of crime and criminals, fictitious or real. Certain pleasant and profitable things, no doubt, retain their pleasure and their profit, to some extent, when they are done in the manner which is technically called criminal; but they seem to me to acquire no additional interest by being so. As the criminal of fact is, in the vast majority of cases, an exceedingly commonplace and dull person, the criminal of fiction seems to me only, or usually, to escape these curses by being absolutely improbable and unreal. But I know this is a terrible heresy.

Henri de Marsay is a much more ambitious and a much more interesting figure. In him are combined the attractions of criminality, beauty, brains, success, and, last of all, dandyism. It is a well-known and delightful fact that the most Anglophobe Frenchmen—and Balzac might fairly be classed among them—have always regarded the English dandy with half-jealous, half-awful admiration. Indeed, our novelist, it will be seen, found it necessary to give Marsay English blood. But there is a tradition that this young Don Juan—not such a good fellow as Byron's, nor such a *grand seigneur* as Molière's—was partly intended to represent Charles de Rémusat, who is best known to this generation by very sober and serious philosophical works, and by his part in his mother's correspondence. I do not know that there ever were any imputations on M. de Rémusat's morals; but in memoirs of the time, he is, I think, accused of a certain selfishness and *hauteur*, and he certainly made his way, partly by journalism, partly by society, to power very much as Marsay did. But Marsay would certainly not have written "Abelard" and the rest, or have returned to Ministerial rank in our own time. Marsay, in fact, more fortunate than Rubempré, and of a higher stamp and flight than Rastignac, makes with them Balzac's trinity of sketches of the kind of personage whose part, in his day and since, every young Frenchman has aspired to play, and some have played. It cannot be said that "a moral man is Marsay"; it cannot be

said that he has the element of good-nature which redeems Rastignac. But he bears a blame and a burden for which we Britons are responsible in part—the Byronic ideal of the guilty hero coming to cross and blacken the old French model of unscrupulous good humor. It is not a very pretty mixture or a very worthy ideal; but I am not so sure that it is not still a pretty common one.

The association of the three stories forming the "Histoire des Treize" is, in book form, original, inasmuch as they filled three out of the four volumes of "Études des Mœurs" published in 1834–35, and themselves forming part of the first collection of "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne." But "Ferragus" had appeared in parts (with titles to each) in the "Revue de Paris" for March and April, 1833, and part of "La Duchesse de Langeais" in the "Echo de la Jeune France" almost contemporaneously. There were divisions in this also. "Ferragus" and "La Duchesse" also appeared without "La Fille aux Yeux d'Or" in 1839, published in one volume by Charpentier, before their absorption at the usual time in the "Comédie."

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In the Paris of the Empire there were found Thirteen men equally impressed with the same idea, equally endowed with energy enough to keep them true to it, while among themselves they were loyal enough to keep faith even when their interests chanced to clash. They were strong enough to set themselves above all laws; bold enough to shrink from no enterprise; and lucky enough to succeed in nearly everything that they undertook. So profoundly politic were they that they could dissemble the tie which bound them together. They ran the greatest risks, and kept their failures to themselves. Fear never entered into their calculations; not one of them had trembled before princes, before the executioner's axe, before innocence. They had taken each other as they were, regardless of social prejudices. Criminals they doubtless were, yet none the less were they all remarkable for some one of the virtues which go to the making of great men, and their numbers were filled up only from among picked recruits. Finally, that nothing should be lacking to complete the dark, mysterious romance of their history, nobody to this day knows who they were. The Thirteen once realized all the wildest ideas conjured up by tales of the occult powers of a Manfred, a Faust, or a Melmoth; and to-day the band is broken up or, at any rate, dispersed. Its members have quietly returned beneath the yoke of the Civil Code; much as Morgan, the Achilles of piracy, gave up buccaneering to be a peaceable planter; and, untroubled by qualms of conscience, sat himself down by the fireside to dispose of bloodstained booty acquired by the red light of blazing towns.

After Napoleon's death, the band was dissolved by a

chance event which the author is bound for the present to pass over in silence, and its mysterious existence, as curious, it may be, as the darkest novel by Mrs. Radcliffe, came to an end.

It was only lately that the present writer, detecting, as he fancied, a faint desire for celebrity in one of the anonymous heroes to whom the whole band once owed an occult allegiance, received the somewhat singular permission to make public certain of the adventures which befell that band, provided that, while telling the story in his own fashion, he observed certain limits.

The aforesaid leader was still an apparently young man with fair hair and blue eyes, and a soft, thin voice which might seem to indicate a feminine temperament. His face was pale, his ways mysterious. He chatted pleasantly, and told me that he was only just turned of forty. He might have belonged to any one of the upper classes. The name which he gave was probably assumed, and no one answering to his description was known in society. Who is he, do you ask? No one knows.

Perhaps when he made his extraordinary disclosures to the present writer, he wished to see them in some sort reproduced; to enjoy the effect of the sensation on the multitude; to feel as Macpherson might have felt when the name of Ossian, his creation, passed into all languages. And, in truth, that Scottish advocate knew one of the keenest, or, at any rate, one of the rarest sensations in human experience. What was this but the incognito of genius? To write an "Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem" is to take one's share in the glory of a century, but to give a Homer to one's country—this surely is a usurpation of the rights of God.

The writer is too well acquainted with the laws of narration to be unaware of the nature of the pledge given by this brief preface; but, at the same time, he knows enough of the history of the Thirteen to feel confident that he shall not disappoint any expectations raised by the programme. Tragedies dripping with gore, comedies piled up with horrors,

tales of heads taken off in secret have been confided to him. If any reader has not had enough of the ghastly tales served up to the public for some time past, he has only to express his wish; the author is in a position to reveal cold-blooded atrocities and family secrets of a gloomy and astonishing nature. But in preference he has chosen those pleasanter stories in which stormy passions are succeeded by purer scenes, where the beauty and goodness of woman shine out the brighter for the darkness. And, to the honor of the Thirteen, such episodes as these are not wanting. Some day perhaps it may be thought worth while to give their whole history to the world; in which case it might form a pendant to the history of the buccaneers—that race apart so curiously energetic, so attractive in spite of their crimes.

When a writer has a true story to tell, he should scorn to turn it into a sort of puzzle toy, after the manner of those novelists who take their reader for a walk through one cavern after another to show him a dried-up corpse at the end of the fourth volume, and inform him, by way of conclusion, that he has been frightened all along by a door hidden somewhere or other behind some tapestry; or a dead body, left by inadvertence, under the floor. So the present chronicler, in spite of his objection to prefaces, felt bound to introduce his fragment by a few remarks.

"Ferragus," the first episode, is connected by invisible links with the history of the Thirteen, for the power which they acquired in a natural manner provides the apparently supernatural machinery.

Again, although a certain literary coquetry may be permissible to retailers of the marvellous, the sober chronicler is bound to forego such advantage as he may reap from an odd-sounding name, on which many ephemeral successes are founded in these days. Wherefore the present writer gives the following succinct statement of the reasons which induced him to adopt the unlikely sounding title and sub-title.

In accordance with old-established custom, "Ferragus" is a name taken by the head of a guild of "Dévorants, id est

Devoirants" or journeymen. Every chief on the day of his election chooses a pseudonym and continues a dynasty of Dévorants precisely as a pope changes his name on his accession to the triple tiara; and as the Church has its Clement XIV., Gregory XII., Julius II., or Alexander VI., so the workmen have their Trempe-la-Soupe IX., Ferragus XXII., Tutanus XIII., or Masche-Fer IV. Who are the Dévorants, do you ask?

The Dévorants are one among many tribes of compagnons whose origin can be traced to a great mystical association formed among the workmen of Christendom for the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. Compagnonnage is still a popular institution in France. Its traditions still exert a power over little-enlightened minds, over men so uneducated that they have not learned to break their oaths; and the various organizations might be turned to formidable account even yet if any rough-hewn man of genius arose to make use of them, for his instruments would be, for the most part, almost blind.

Wherever journeymen travel, they find a hostel for compagnons which has been in existence in the town from time immemorial. The obade, as they call it, is a kind of lodge with a "Mother" in charge, an old, half gypsy wife who has nothing to lose. She hears all that goes on in the countryside; and, either from fear or from long habit, is devoted to the interests of the tribe boarded and lodged by her. And as a result, this shifting population, subject as it is to an unalterable law of custom, has eyes in every place, and will carry out an order anywhere without asking questions; for the oldest journeyman is still at an age when a man has some beliefs left. What is more, the whole fraternity professes doctrines which, if unfolded never so little, are both true enough and mysterious enough to electrify all the adepts with patriotism; and the compagnons are so attached to their rules that there have been bloody battles between different fraternities on a question of principle. Fortunately, however, for peace and public order, if a Dévorant

is ambitious, he takes to building houses, makes a fortune, and leaves the guild.

A great many curious things might be told of their rivals, the "Compagnons du Devoir," of all the different sects of workmen, their manners and customs and brotherhoods, and of the resemblances between them and the Freemasons; but here, these particulars would be out of place. The author will merely add, that before the Revolution a Trempe-la-Soupe had been known in the King's service, which is to say, that he had the tenure of a place in His Majesty's galleys for one hundred and one years; but even thence he ruled his guild, and was religiously consulted on all matters, and if he escaped from the hulks he met with help, succor, and respect wherever he went. To have a chief in the hulks is one of those misfortunes for which Providence is responsible; but a faithful lodge of dévorants is bound, as before, to obey a power created by and set above themselves. Their lawful sovereign is in exile for the time being, but none the less is he their king. And now any romantic mystery hanging about the words Ferragus and the dévorants is completely dispelled.

As for the Thirteen, the author feels that, on the strength of the details of this almost fantastic story, he can afford to give away yet another prerogative, though it is one of the greatest on record, and would possibly fetch a high price if brought into a literary auction mart; for the owner might inflict as many volumes on the public as "La Contemporaine."[1]

The Thirteen were all of them men tempered like Byron's friend Trelawney, the original (so it is said) of "The Corsair." All of them were fatalists, men of spirit and poetic temperament; all of them were tired of the commonplace life which they led; all felt attracted toward Asiatic pleasures by all the vehement strength of newly awakened and long dormant forces. One of these, chancing to take

[1] A long series of so-called Memoirs, which appeared about 1830.

up "Venice Preserved" for the second time, admired the sublime friendship between Pier and Jaffir, and fell to musing on the virtues of outlaws, the loyalty of the hulks, the honor of thieves, and the immense power that a few men can wield if they bring their whole minds to bear upon the carrying out of a single will. It struck him that the individual man rose higher than men. Then he began to think that if a few picked men should band themselves together; and if, to natural wit, and education, and money, they could join a fanaticism hot enough to fuse, as it were, all these separate forces into a single one, then the whole world would be at their feet. From that time forth, with a tremendous power of concentration, they could wield an occult power against which the organization of society would be helpless; a power which would push obstacles aside and defeat the will of others; and the diabolical power of all would be at the service of each. A hostile world apart within the world, admitting none of the ideas, recognizing none of the laws of the world; submitting only to the sense of necessity, obedient only from devotion; acting all as one man in the interests of the comrade who should claim the aid of the rest; a band of buccaneers with carriages and yellow kid gloves; a close confederacy of men of extraordinary power, of amused and cool spectators of an artificial and petty world which they cursed with smiling lips; conscious as they were that they could make all things bend to their caprice, weave ingenious schemes of revenge, and live with the life in thirteen hearts, to say nothing of the unfailing pleasure of facing the world of men with a hidden misanthropy, a sense that they were armed against their kind, and could retire into themselves with one idea which the most remarkable men had not—all this constituted a religion of pleasure and egoism which made fanatics of the Thirteen. The history of the Society of Jesus was repeated for the devil's benefit. It was hideous and sublime.

The pact was made; and it lasted, precisely because it seemed impossible. And so it came to pass that in Paris

there was a fraternity of thirteen men, each one bound, body and soul, to the rest, and all of them strangers to each other in the sight of the world. But evening found them gathered together like conspirators, and then they had no thoughts apart; riches, like the wealth of the Old Man of the Mountain, they possessed in common; they had their feet in every salon, their hands in every strong-box, their elbows in the streets, their heads upon all pillows, they did not scruple to help themselves at their pleasure. No chief commanded them, nobody was strong enough. The liveliest passion, the most urgent need took precedence—that was all. They were thirteen unknown kings; unknown, but with all the power and more than the power of kings; for they were both judges and executioners, they had taken wings that they might traverse the heights and depths of society, scorning to take any place in it, since all was theirs. If the author learns the reason of their abdication, he will communicate it.

And now the author is free to give those episodes in the History of the Thirteen which, by reason of the Parisian flavor of the details or the strangeness of the contrasts, possessed a peculiar attraction for him.

PARIS, 1831.

THE THIRTEEN

I

FERRAGUS

CHEF DES DEVORANTS

To Hector Berlioz

THERE ARE STREETS in Paris which have lost their character as hopelessly as a man guilty of some shameful action; there are likewise noble streets, streets that are simply honest and nothing more, young streets as to whose morality the public as yet has formed no opinion, and streets older than the oldest dowager. Then there are deadly streets, respectable streets, streets that are always clean, and streets that are invariably filthy; artisan, industrial, and commercial streets. The streets of Paris, in short, possess human qualities, so that you cannot help forming certain ideas of them on a first impression. There are low streets where you would not care to linger, and streets in which you would like to live. Some, like the Rue Montmartre, for instance, turn a fair front on you at the first and end in a fish's tail. The Rue de la Paix is a wide and imposing street, but it arouses none of the nobly gracious thoughts which take a susceptible nature at unawares in the Rue Royale, while it certainly lacks the majesty which pervades the Place Vendome.

If you take your walks abroad through the Ile Saint-Louis, the loneliness of the spot, the dreary look of the houses and great empty mansions is enough to account for the melancholy which settles on your nerves. The Ile

Saint-Louis, a corpse no longer tenanted by farmers-general, is the Venice of Paris. The Place de la Bourse is garrulous, bustling, common; it is only beautiful by moonlight; an epitomized Paris in broad day, by night a dream-like vision of ancient Greece.

Is not the Rue Traversière Saint-Honoré plainly a shameless street, with its villanous little houses a couple of windows in width, and vice, and crime, and misery on every floor? And there are thoroughfares with a north aspect, visited by the sun only three or four times in the year; deadly streets are they, where life is taken with impunity, and the law looks on and never interferes. In olden days the Parliament would probably have summoned the lieutenant of police to hear a little plain speaking, or at least they would have passed a vote of censure on the street, just as on another occasion they recorded their dissatisfaction with the perukes worn by the Chapter of Beauvais. Yet, M. Benoiston de Chateauneuf has shown conclusively that the mortality in certain streets is twice as high as the normal death-rate! And to sum up the matter in a single example, what is the Rue Fromenteau but a haunt of vice and murder?

These observations may be dark sayings for those who live beyond the bounds of Paris; but they will be apprehended at once by those students, thinkers, poets, and men of pleasure who know the art of walking the streets of Paris, and reap a harvest of delights borne in on the tides of life that ebb and flow within her walls with every hour. For these, Paris is the most fascinating of monsters; here she is a pretty woman, there a decrepit pauper; some quarters are spick and span as the coins of a new reign, and a nook here and there is elegant as a woman of fashion.

A monster, indeed, is the great city, in every sense of the word! In the garrets you find, as it were, its brain full of knowledge and genius; the first floor is a digestive apparatus, and the shops below are unmistakable feet, whence all the busy foot-traffic issues.

Oh! what a life of incessant activity the monster leads! The last vibration of the last carriage returning from the ball has scarcely died away before Its arms begin to stir a little at the barriers, and the City gives itself a gradual shake. All the gates begin to yawn, turning on their hinges like the membranes of some gigantic lobster invisibly controlled by some thirty thousand men and women. Each one of these thirty thousand must live in the allotted six square feet of space which serves as kitchen, workshop, nursery, bedroom, and garden; each one is bound to see everything, while there is scarce light enough to see anything. Imperceptibly the monster's joints creak, the stir of life spreads, the street finds a tongue, and by noon it is alive everywhere, the chimneys smoke, the monster feeds, and with a roar It stretches out its myriad paws. 'Tis a wonderful sight! And yet, oh Paris! who has not marvelled at thy dark passages, thy fitful gleams of light, thy deep, soundless blind alleys? They who have not heard thy murmurs between midnight and two o'clock in the morning, know nothing as yet of thy real poetry, of thy bizarre, broad contrasts.

There are a very few amateurs, amateurs are they that can keep a steady head and take their Paris with gusto; and these know the physiognomy of the city so well that they know "even her spots, her blemishes, and her warts." Others may think of Paris as the monstrous marvel, as an astounding assemblage of brains and machinery in motion, as the City of a Hundred Thousand Romances, the head of the world. But for these who know her, Paris wears a dull or a gay face, she is ugly or fair, alive or dead; for them she is a living creature. Every room in a house is a lobe of the cellular tissue of the great courtesan, whose heart, and brain, and fantastic life they know to the uttermost. Therefore they are her lovers. They look up at a street corner, knowing that they shall see a clock-face; they tell a friend with an empty snuffbox to "take such and such a turning, and you will find a tobacconist's shop

to the left, next door to a pastry-cook that has a pretty wife."

For poets of this order, a walk through Paris is an expensive luxury. How refuse to spend a few minutes in watching the dramas, the accidents, the faces, the picturesque chance effects which importune you in the streets of the restless Queen of Cities that goes clad in placards, yet can boast not one clean corner, so complacent is she to the vices of the French nation. Who has not left home in the morning for the uttermost ends of Paris, and recognized by dinner-time the futility of his efforts to get away from the centre? Such as these will pardon these vagrant beginnings, which, after all, may be summed up by one eminently profitable and novel observation (so far as any observation can be novel in Paris, where there is nothing new, not even the statue set up yesterday, on which the street urchin has left his mark already).

Well, then—there are certain streets, unknown for the most part by fashionable people, there are certain districts and certain houses to which a woman of fashion cannot go, unless she wishes that the most cruelly injurious constructions shall be put upon her errand. If she is a wealthy woman with a carriage of her own, and if she chooses to go on foot, or disguised, through one of these slums, her reputation as an honest woman is compromised. If, furthermore, it should so happen that she is seen about nine o'clock in the evening, the conjectures which an observer may permit himself are like to have appalling consequences. And, finally, if the woman is young and pretty; if she is seen to enter a house in one of these neighborhoods; if the house has a long, dark, damp, and reeking passage-entry; if, at the end of the passage, a feeble, flickering lamp lights up the features of a hideous crone with bony fingers—then, to tell the truth in the interests of young and pretty women, that woman is lost. She is at the mercy of the first man of her acquaintance who chances to meet her in these foul ways.

And there is a street in Paris where such an encounter

may end in a most dreadful and ghastly tragedy, a tragedy of blood, a tragedy in the modern vein. Unluckily, the convincingness of the situation and the dramatic element in it will be lost, like the modern drama, upon all save the very few; and a sad pity it is that the tale must be told to a public that cannot fully appreciate the truth of the local color. Still, who can flatter himself that he will ever be understood? We all die unappreciated. It is the lot of women and of men of letters.

At half-past eight one February evening, thirteen years ago, a young man chanced to turn the corner of the Rue Pagevin into the Rue des Vieux-Augustins precisely at the point where the Rue Soly enters it. Now, at that time there was not a wall in the Rue Pagevin but echoed a foul word; the Rue Soly was one of the narrowest and least practicable thoroughfares in Paris, not excepting the most frequented nooks in the most deserted streets of the city; and the young man came there by one of those chances that do not come twice in a lifetime. Arrived at this point, he was walking carelessly along when he saw a woman a few paces ahead of him, and fancied that he saw in her a vague resemblance to one of the prettiest women in Paris, a beautiful and modest woman whom he secretly and passionately loved; loved, too, without hope. She was married. In a moment his heart gave a bound. An intolerable heat, kindled in his diaphragm, spread through every vein. He felt a cold chill along his spine, a tingling sensation on the surface of his face.

He was young, he was in love, he knew Paris. His perspicacity would not allow him to shut his eyes to all the vile possibilities of the situation—a young, fair, and wealthy woman of fashion stealing along the street with a guilty, furtive step! That She should be in that filthy neighborhood at that hour of night!

His love seems romantic, no doubt, and the more so because he was an officer in the Guards. Of a man in an

infantry regiment the thing is not inconceivable; but as a cavalry officer high in the service, he belonged to a division of the army that most desires rapid conquests. The cavalry are vain of their uniform, but they are vainer still of their success with women. Nevertheless, the officer's love was a genuine passion that will seem great to many a young heart. He loved the woman because she was virtuous. Her virtues, her reserved grace, the saintliness that awed him—these were the most precious treasures of his hidden passion. And she, in truth, was worthy of a Platonic love such as you sometimes find like a rare flower on the chronicler's page among the ruin and bloodshed of the Middle Ages. She was worthy to be the secret spring of all a young man's actions; the source of a love as high and pure as the blue heavens, a love without hope, to which a man clings because it never disappoints him, a love prodigal of uncontrolled delight, especially at an age when hearts are hot and imaginations poignant, and a man's eyes see very clearly.

There are strange, grotesque, inconceivable night effects to be seen in Paris; you cannot think, unless you have amused yourself with watching these, how fantastic a woman's shape can grow in the dusk. Sometimes the creature whom you follow by accident or design seems graceful and slender; sometimes a glimpse of a stocking, if it is very white, leads you to think that the outlines beneath are dainty and fine; a figure, muffled up, it may be, in a shawl or a pelisse, develops young luxuriant curves in the shadows; and as a last touch, the uncertain light from a shop-window or a street lamp lends the stranger a fleeting halo, an illusion which stirs and kindles imagination to go beyond the truth. And then, the scenes are stirred, color and life is put into everything, the woman is transfigured; her outward form grows fairer; there are moments when she is a woman no longer, she is an evil spirit, a will-of-the-wisp, drawing you further and further by a glowing magnetism until you reach—some decent dwelling, and the poor housewife, terrified by your menacing approach, and quaking at the sound of a man's

boots, promptly shuts the door in your face without giving you so much as a glance.

Suddenly the flickering light from a shoemaker's window fell across the woman in front; it struck just across the hollow of the back. Ah! surely those curves belonged to Her only among women! Who else knew that secret of chaste movement which all innocently brings the beauty of the most attractive shape into relief.

It was the same shawl and velvet bonnet that she wore in the morning. Not a speck on her gray stockings; not a trace of mud on her shoes. The shawl clung tightly about the outlines of her bust, vaguely molding its exquisite contours; but the young man had seen those white shoulders in the ballroom, and he knew what a wealth of beauty was hidden beneath the shawl.

An intelligent observer can guess by the way in which a Parisienne wraps her shawl about her shoulders, by her manner of lifting her foot, on what mysterious errand she is bent. There is an indescribable tremor and lightness about her and her movements; she seems to weigh less, she walks on and on, or rather she threads her way like a spinning star, flitting, borne along by a thought, which the folds of her dress, the flutter of her skirts, betray.

The young man quickened his pace, passed, and turned his head to look at her— Presto! She had disappeared down an entry, a wicket with a bell attached slammed and tinkled after her. He turned back and caught sight of her as she climbed the staircase at the end of the passage, not without obsequious greetings on the part of an old portress below. It was a crooked staircase, the lamplight fell full on the lowest steps, up which the lady sprang lightly and briskly, as an impatient woman might do.

"Why impatient?" he asked himself, as he went back to plant himself against the opposite wall. He gazed up, luckless wight, watching every story as narrowly as if he were a detective on the track of a conspirator.

It was a house like thousands of others in Paris, mean,

commonplace, narrow, dingy, with three windows on each of the four floors. The shop and the entresol belonged to the shoemaker. The first-floor shutters were closed. Whither had the lady gone? He fancied that he heard the jingling of a door bell on the second floor. And, in fact, a light began to move in a room above, with two brightly illuminated windows, and presently appeared in a third window, hitherto in darkness, which seemed to belong to the parlor or dining-room. In a moment the vague shadow of a woman's bonnet appeared on the ceiling, the door was closed, the first room relegated to darkness, and the two further windows shone red as before. Just then a voice cried, "*Look out!*" and something struck against the young man's shoulder.

"You don't seem to mind in the least what you are about," said the gruff voice. It was a workman, carrying a long plank on his shoulder. He went by. The man might have been sent as a warning by Providence to ask the prying inquirer, "What are you meddling for? Mind your own business, and leave Parisiennes to their own little affairs."

The officer folded his arms; and being out of sight of every one, he allowed two angry tears to roll down his cheeks. The sight of these shadows moving across the windows was painful to him; he looked away up the Rue des Vieux-Augustins, and saw a hackney cab drawn up under a blind wall, at a distance from any house door or shop window.

Is it she? Or is it not? Life or death for a lover. And the lover waited in suspense for an age of twenty minutes. Then she came downstairs, and he knew past mistake that this was the woman whom he loved in his secret soul. Yet even now he tried to doubt. The fair stranger went to the cab and stepped into it.

"The house is always there," thought he; "I can search it at any time"; so he ran after the cab to make quite certain of the lady. Any remaining doubt was soon removed.

The vehicle stopped before a flower shop in the Rue de Richelieu, close to the Rue de Ménars. The lady alighted, entered the shop, sent out the fare to the cabman, and chose some marabouts. Feather plumes for that black hair of hers, with her dark beauty! She brought the feathers close to her face to judge of the effect. The officer fancied he could hear the shopwoman speaking.

"Nothing more becoming, madame, to a dark complexion; there is something rather too hard about the contours of a brunette; the marabouts impart just the fluffy touch which is wanting. Her Grace the Duchesse de Langeais says that the feathers lend something vague and Ossianic, and a great distinction to a face."

"Well, send them to me at once."

With that the lady tripped away round the corner into the Rue de Ménars and entered her own house. The door closed upon her, and the young lover, his hopes lost, and double misfortune, his cherished beliefs lost too, went through Paris like a drunken man, till before long he found himself at his own door, with no very clear knowledge how he came there. He flung himself into an easy-chair, rested his feet on the fire-dogs, and sat, with his head in his hands, while his soaked boots first dried and then scorched on the bars. It was a dreadful hour for him; he had come to one of those crises in a man's life when character is modified; and the course of action of the best of men depends upon the first lucky or unlucky step that he chances to take; upon Providence or Fate, whichever you choose.

He came of a good family, not that their nobility was of very ancient date; but there are so few old houses left in these days that any young man comes of an old family. One of his ancestors had purchased the post of Councillor to the Parliament of Paris, and in course of time became President. His sons, with a fine fortune apiece, had entered the King's service, made good marriages, and arrived at Court. Then came the Revolution and swept them all away. One of them, however, an old and stubborn dowager, who

had no mind to emigrate, remained in Paris, was put in prison, and lay there in danger of her life till the 9th Thermidor saved her, and finally she recovered her property. Afterward, at an auspicious moment in 1804, she sent for her grandson Auguste de Maulincour, sole surviving scion of the Carbonnons de Maulincourt, and in the characters of mother, noble, and self-willed dowager brought him up with treble care.

At a later day, after the Restoration, Auguste de Maulincour, aged eighteen, entered the Maison Rouge, followed the Princes to Ghent, received a commission in the Guards, and at three-and-twenty was a major in a cavalry regiment—a superb position which he owed to his grandmother. And indeed, in spite of her age, the old lady knew her way at Court remarkably well.

This twofold biography, with some variations, is substantially the history of every family of émigrés, when blessed with debts and possessions, dowagers and tact.

Madame la Baronne de Maulincourt had a friend, the elderly Vidame de Pamiers, a sometime Commander of the Order of Malta. It was an eternal friendship of the kind that grows out of other ties formed sixty years ago, a friendship which nothing can destroy, because down in the depths of it lie secrets of the hearts of man and woman. These, if one had the time, would be well worth guessing; but such secrets, condensed into a score of lines, lose their savor; they should furnish forth instead some four volumes that might prove as interesting as "Le Doyen de Killerine"—a work which young men are wont to discuss and criticise and leave unread.

Auguste de Maulincour was connected, therefore, with the Faubourg Saint-Germain through his grandmother and the Vidame; and with a name that dated two centuries back, he could assume the airs and opinions of others who traced their descent from Clovis. Tall, pale, slender, and delicate-looking, a man of honor whose courage, moreover, was undoubted (for he had fought duels without hesitation for the

least thing in life)—he had never yet been on a field of battle, and wore the Cross of the Legion of Honor at his buttonhole. He represented, as you see, one of the mistakes of the Restoration, perhaps one of its more pardonable mistakes.

The young manhood of the Restoration period was unlike the youth of any other epoch, in that it was placed between memories of the Empire on the one hand, and of exile on the other; between the old traditions of the Court and the conscientious bourgeois system of training for appointments; between bigotry and fancy dress balls; between a Louis XVIII., who saw nothing but the present moment, and a Charles X., who looked too far ahead. The young generation was always halting between two political creeds; blind and yet clairvoyant, bound to respect the will of the King, knowing the while that the Crown was entering on a mistaken policy. The older men counted the younger as naught, and jealously kept the reins of government in their enfeebled hands at a time when the Monarchy might have been saved by their withdrawal and the accession of that young France at whom the old-fashioned doctrinaires and émigrés of the Restoration are still pleased to laugh.

Auguste de Maulincour was one victim of the ideas that weighed upon the youth of those days. It was in this wise. The Vidame de Pamiers, even at the age of sixty-seven, was still a very lively personage, who had both seen and lived a great deal. He told a story well, he was a man of honor and gallantry, but so far as women were concerned he held the most detestable opinions. He fell in love, but he did not respect women. Women's honor, women's sentiments? Fiddle-de-dee! folly and make-believe. In the company of women he believed in them, did this *ci-devant* "monster"; he brought out their merits, he never contradicted a lady. But among friends, when women were in question, the Vidame laid it down as an axiom that the whole duty of a young man was to deceive women and to carry on several intrigues at once; and that when a young man attempted to meddle with affairs of State, he made a gross mistake.

It is vexatious to be obliged to sketch such a hackneyed character. Where has he not appeared? Is he not literally almost as worn out as the Imperial Grenadier? But over M. de Maulincour the Vidame exercised an influence which must be recorded; he was a moralist after his own fashion, and he used to try to convert the young man to the doctrines of the great age of gallantry.

As for the dowager, she was a tender, pious woman, placed between her Vidame and God; a pattern of grace and sweetness, but none the less endowed with a persistence which never went beyond the bounds of good taste, and always triumphed in the end. She had tried to preserve her grandson in all the fair illusions of life; she had brought him up on the best principles; she had given him all her own delicacy of feeling, and had made a diffident man of him, and to all appearance an absolute fool. His boy's sensibility, untouched by contact with the world, had met with no rubs without; so modest, so keenly sensitive was it, that actions and maxims to which the world attaches no importance grieved him sorely. He felt ashamed of his sensitiveness, hid it beneath a show of assurance, and suffered in silence, laughing in company at things which he alone in his secret heart admired. And therefore he was mistaken in his choice; for by a common freak of Fate he, the man of mild melancholy, who saw love in its spiritual aspects, must needs fall in love with a woman who detested German *sensiblerie*. He began to distrust himself. He grew moody, hugged himself on his troubles, and made moan because he was not understood. And then—since we always desire a thing more vehemently because it is hard to win—he continued to worship women with the ingenious tenderness and feline delicacy of which they possess the secret; perhaps, too, they prefer to keep the monopoly of it. And, indeed, though women complain that men love amiss, they have very little taste for the semi-feminine nature in man. Their whole superiority consists in making the man believe that he is their inferior in love; for which reason they are quite ready to discard a lover when he is

experienced enough to rob them of the fears in which they choose to deck themselves, to relieve them of the delicious torments of feigned jealousy, the troubles of disappointed hopes and vain suspense, and the whole train of dear feminine miseries, in short. Women hold Grandisons in abhorrence. What is more contrary to their nature than a peaceful and perfect love? They must have emotions. Bliss without storms for them is not bliss at all. A soul great enough to bring the Infinite into love is as uncommon among women as genius among men. A great passion is as rare as a masterpiece. Outside this love there lies nothing but arrangements and passing excitations, contemptible, like all petty things.

In the midst of the secret disasters of his heart, while he was seeking some one who should understand him (that quest, by the way, is the lover's folly of our time), Auguste found a perfect woman—a woman with that indescribable touch of sacredness and holiness which inspires such reverence that love needs all the support of a long intimacy to declare itself. He found her in a circle as far as possible from his own, in the second sphere of that financial world in which great capitalists take the first place.

Then Auguste gave himself up wholly to the bliss of the most moving and profound of passions; a purely contemplative love—a love made up of uncounted repressed longings, of shades of passions so vague, so deep, so fugitive, so vivid, that it is hard to find a comparison for them; they are like sweet scents, or sunlight, or cloud shadows, like all things that shine forth for a moment in the outer world to vanish, revive, and die, and leave a long wake of emotion in the heart. When a man is young enough to conceive melancholy and far-off hopes, to see in woman something more than a woman, can any greater happiness befall him than this—of loving so well that the mere contact of a white glove, the light touch of a woman's hair, the sound of a voice, the chance of one look, fills him with a joy outpassing a fortunate lover's ecstasy of possession? And for this

reason, none but slighted, shy, unattractive, unhappy men and women, unknown lovers, know all that there is in the sound of the voice of the one whom they love. It is because those fire-laden vibrations of the air have their source and origin in the soul itself that they bring hearts into communication with such violence, such lucid thought transference. So little misleading are they, that a single modulation is often a revelation in itself. What enchantment is poured forth upon a poet's heart by the musical resonance of a low voice! What freshness it spreads through his soul, what visions it summons up! Love is in the voice before the eyes make confession.

Auguste, a poet after the manner of lovers—for there are poets who feel and poets who express, and the former are the happier—Auguste had known the sweetness of all these early joys, so far-reaching, so abundant. *She* was the possessor of such an entrancing voice as the most guileful of women might covert, that she might deceive others at her pleasure; hers were those silver notes, low only to the ear, that peal aloud through the heart, soothing the tumult and unrest that they stir.

And this was the woman who had gone at night to the Rue Soly in the neighborhood of the Rue Pagevin! He had seen her stealing into a house of ill-fame; and that most magnificent of passions had been brought low. The Vidame's reasoning triumphed.

"If she is false to her husband, we will both avenge ourselves," said Auguste. And there was still love left in that *if*. The suspended judgment of Cartesian philosophy is a homage always due to virtue. The clocks struck ten; and Auguste de Maulincour bethought himself that the woman he loved must surely be going to a dance at a house that he knew. He dressed, went thither, and made a furtive survey of the rooms. Mme. de Nucingen, seeing him thus intent, came to speak to him.

"You are looking for Mme. Jules; she has not come yet."

"Good-evening, dear," said a voice.

Mme. de Nucingen and Auguste both turned. There stood Mme. Jules dressed in white, simple and noble, wearing those very feathers which the Baron had watched her choose in the shop. That voice of Love went to his heart. If he had only known how to assert the slightest claim to be jealous of the woman before him, he would have turned her to stone then and there with the exclamation, "Rue Soly!" But he, a stranger, might have repeated those words a hundred times in Mme. Jules's ear, and she in astonishment would merely ask him what he meant. He stared at her with dazed eyes.

Ill-natured men who scoff at everything may, perhaps, find it highly amusing to discover a woman's secret, to know that her chastity is a lie, that there are strange thoughts in the depths beneath the quiet surface, and an ugly tragedy behind the pure forehead. But there are others, no doubt, who are saddened at heart by it; and many of the scoffers, when at home and alone with themselves, curse the world, and despise such a woman. This was how Auguste de Maulincour felt as he confronted Mme. Jules. It was a strange position. He and this woman exchanged a few words seven or eight times in a season—that was all; yet he was charging her with stolen pleasure of which she knew nothing, and pronouncing judgment without telling her of the accusation.

Many a young man has done the same and gone home broken-hearted because all is over between him and some woman whom he once worshipped in his heart, and now scorns in his inmost soul. Then follow soliloquies heard of none, spoken to the walls of some lonely refuge; storms raised and quieted in the heart's depths, wonderful scenes of man's inner life which still await their painter.

M. Jules Desmarets made the round of the rooms, while his wife took a seat. But she seemed embarrassed in some way; and as she chatted with her neighbor, she stole a glance now and again at her husband. M. Jules Desmarets was the Baron de Nucingen's stockbroker. And now for the history of the husband and wife.

M. Desmarets, five years before his marriage, was a clerk in a stockbroker's office; he had nothing in the world but his slender salary. But he was one of those men whom misfortune teaches to know life in a very few lessons, men who strike out their line and keep to it persistently as an insect; like other obstinate creatures he could sham death if anything stopped him, and weary out the patience of opponents by the patience of the woodlouse. Young as he was, he possessed all the republican virtues of the poor; he was sober, he never wasted his time, he set his face against pleasure. He was waiting. Nature, besides, had given him the immense advantage of a prepossessing exterior. His calm, pure forehead, the outlines of his placid yet expressive features, the simplicity of his manners, and everything about him, told of a hard-working, uncomplaining existence, of the high personal dignity which inspires awe in others, and of that quiet nobleness of spirit which is equal to all situations. His modesty impressed those who knew him with a certain respect.

It was a solitary life, however, that he led in the midst of Paris. Society he saw only by glimpses during the few minutes spent on holidays in his employer's drawing-room. And in him, as in most men who lead such a life, there were astonishing depths of passion, inward forces too great to be brought into play by small occasions. His narrow means compelled him to live like an ascetic, and he subdued his fancies with hard work. After growing pale over figures, he sought relaxation in a dogged effort to acquire the wider knowledge so necessary to any man that would make his mark in these days, whether in business, at the bar, in politics or letters. The one reef in the careers of these finer natures is their very honesty. They come across some penniless girl, fall in love, and marry her, and afterward wear out their lives in the struggle for existence, with want on the one hand, love on the other. Housekeeping bills will extinguish the loftiest ambition. Jules Desmarets went straight ahead upon that reef.

One evening, at his employer's house, he met a young lady of the rarest beauty. Love rapidly made such havoc as a passion can make in a lonely and slighted heart, when an unhappy creature's affections have been starved, and the fair hours of youth consumed by continual work. So certain are they to love in earnest, so swiftly does their whole being centre itself upon the woman to whom they are attracted, that when she is present they are conscious of exquisite sensations, in none of which she shares. This is the most flattering form of egoism for the woman who can see, beneath the apparent immobility of passion, the feeling stirred in depths so remote that it is long before it reappears at the human surface. Such unfortunates as these are anchorites in the heart of Paris; they know all the joys of anchorites; sometimes, too, they may yield to their temptations; but it still more frequently happens that they are thwarted, betrayed, and misinterpreted; and only very seldom are they permitted to gather the sweet fruits of the love that seems to them like a power dropped down from heaven.

A smile from his wife, a mere modulation of her voice, was enough to give Jules Desmarets a conception of the infinite of love. Happily the concentrated fire of passion within revealed itself artlessly to the woman for whom it burned. And these two human creatures loved each other devoutly. To sum up all in a few words, they took each other by the hand without a blush, and went through the world together as two children, brother and sister, might pass through a crowd that makes way admiringly for them.

The young lady was in the odious position in which selfishness places some children at their birth. She had no recognized status; her name, Clémence, and her age were attested, not by a certificate of birth, but by a declaration made before a notary. As to her fortune, it was trifling. Jules Desmarets, hearing these bad tidings, was the happiest of men. If Clémence had belonged to some wealthy family, he would have despaired; but she was a poor love-child, the offspring of a dark, illicit passion. They were married.

This was the beginning of a series of pieces of good fortune for Jules. Everybody envied him his luck; jealous tongues alleged that he succeeded by sheer good fortune, and left his merits and ability out of account.

Clémence's mother, nominally her godmother, bade Jules purchase a stockbroker's connection a few days after the wedding, promising to secure all the necessary capital. Such connections were still to be bought at moderate prices. On the great lady's recommendation, a wealthy capitalist made proposals on the most favorable terms to Jules Desmarets that evening in the stockbroker's own drawing-room, loaned him money enough to exploit his business, and by the next day the fortunate clerk had bought his employer's connection.

In four years Jules Desmarets was one of the wealthiest members of his fraternity. Important clients had been added to the number of those left him by his predecessor. He inspired unbounded confidence; and from the manner in which business came to him, it was impossible but that he should recognize some occult influence due to his wife's mother, or, as he believed, to the mysterious protection of Providence.

Three years after the marriage Clémence lost her godmother. By that time M. Jules, so called to distinguish him from his elder brother, whom he had established in Paris as a notary, was in receipt of an income of two hundred thousand livres. There was not such another happy couple in Paris. A five years' course of such unwonted love had been troubled but once by a slander, for which M. Jules took a signal vengeance. One of his old associates said that M. Jules owed his success to his wife, and that influence in high places had been dearly bought. The inventor of the slander was killed in the duel. A passionate love so deeply rooted that it stood the test of marriage was much admired in society, though some women were displeased by it. It was pretty to see them together; they were respected, and made much of on all sides. M. and

Mme. Jules were really popular, perhaps because there is no pleasanter sight than happy love, but they never stayed long in crowded rooms, and escaped to their nest as soon as they could, like two strayed doves.

The nest, however, was a fine large house in the Rue de Ménars, in which artistic feeling tempered the luxury which the city man is always supposed to display. Here, also, M. and Mme. Jules entertained splendidly. Social duties were somewhat irksome to them; but, nevertheless, Jules Desmarets submitted to such exactions, knowing that sooner or later a family will need acquaintances. He and his wife lived like plants in a hothouse in a stormy world. With very natural delicacy, Jules carefully kept the slander from his wife's knowledge as well as the death of the man that had almost troubled their felicity.

Mme. Jules, with her artistic temper and refinement, had inclinations toward luxury. In spite of the terrible lesson of the duel, there were incautious women to hint in whispers that Mme. Jules must often be pinched for money. Her husband allowed her twenty thousand francs for her dress and pocket money, but this could not possibly be enough, they said, for her expenses. And, indeed, she was often more daintily dressed in her own home than in other people's houses. She only cared to adorn herself for her husband's eyes, trying in this way to prove to him that for her he was all the world. This was love indeed, pure love, and more than this, it was happy as clandestine love sanctioned by the world can be. M. Jules was still his wife's lover, and more in love every day. Everything in his wife, even her caprices, made him happy. When she had no new fancy to gratify, he felt as much disturbed as if this had been a symptom of bad health.

It was against this passion that Auguste de Maulincour, for his misfortune, had dashed himself. He loved Clémence de Maulincourt to distraction. And yet even with a supreme passion in his heart he was not ridiculous, and he lived the regular garrison life, yet even with a glass of champagne in

his hand he wore an abstracted air. His was the quiet scorn of existence, the clouded countenance worn alike on various pretexts by jaded spirits, by men but little satisfied with the hollowness of their lives, and by the victims of pulmonary disease or heart troubles. A hopeless love or a distaste for existence constitutes a sort of social position nowadays.

To take a queen's heart by storm were perhaps a more hopeful enterprise than a madly-conceived passion for a woman happily married. Auguste de Maulincour had sufficient excuse for his gravity and dejection. A queen has always the vanity of her power; her height above her lover places her at a disadvantage; but a well-principled bourgeoise, like a hedgehog or an oyster, is encompassed about with awkward defences.

At this particular moment Auguste stood near his undeclared lady. She, certainly, was incapable of carrying on a double intrigue. There sat Mme. Jules in childlike composure, the least guileful of women, gentle, full of queenly serenity. What depths can there be in human nature? The Baron, before addressing her, kept his eyes on husband and wife in turn. What reflections did he not make! In a minute's space he recomposed a second version of Young's "Night Thoughts." And yet—the rooms were filled with dance music, and the light of hundreds of wax tapers streamed down upon them. It was a banker's ball, one of those insolent fetes by which the world of dull gold attempted to rival that other world of gilded rank and ormolu, the world where the high-born Faubourg Saint-Germain was laughing yet, all unconscious that a day was approaching when capitalists would invade the Luxembourg and seat a king on the throne. Conspiracy used to dance in those days, giving as little thought to future bankruptcies of Power as to failures ahead in the financial world. M. le Baron de Nucingen's gilded salons wore that look of animation which a fete in Paris is wont to wear; there is gayety, at any rate, on the surface. The wit of the cleverer men infects the fools, while the beaming expression characteristic of the latter

spreads over the countenances of their superiors in intellect; and the whole room is brightened by the exchange. But gayety in Paris is always a little like a display of fireworks; pleasure, coquetry, and wit all coruscate, and then die out like spent rockets. To-morrow morning, wit, coquetry, and pleasure are put off and forgotten.

"Heigho!" thought Auguste, as he came to a conclusion, "are women really after all as the Vidame sees them? Certain it is that of all the women dancing here to-night, not one seems so irreproachable as Mme. Jules. And Mme. Jules goes to the Rue Soly!"

The Rue Soly was like a disease, the mere word made his heart contract.

"Do you never dance, madame?" he began.

"This is the third time that you have asked me that question this winter," she answered, smiling.

"But perhaps you have never given me an answer."

"That is true."

"I knew quite well that you were false, like all women—"

Mme. Jules laughed again.

"Listen to me, monsieur. If I told you my real reason for not dancing, it would seem ridiculous to you. There is no insincerity, I think, in declining to give private reasons at which people usually laugh."

"Any confidence, madame, implies a degree of friendship of which I, no doubt, am unworthy. But it is impossible that you should have any but noble secrets, and can you think me capable of irreverent jesting?"

"Yes," she said. "You, like the rest of men, laugh at our purest feelings and misconstrue them. Besides, I have no secrets. I have a right to love my husband before all the world; I am proud of it, I tell you; and if you laugh at me when I say that I never dance with any one else, I shall have the worst opinion of your heart."

"Have you never danced with any one but your husband since your marriage?"

"No, monsieur. I have leaned on no other arm, no one else has come very close to me."

"Has not your doctor so much as felt your pulse?"

"Ah, well, now you are laughing."

"No, madame, I admire you because I can understand. —But you suffer others to hear your voice, to see you, to . . . In short, you permit our eyes to rest admiringly on you—"

"Ah, these things trouble me," she broke in. "If it were possible for husband and wife to live like lover and mistress, I would have it so; for in that case—"

"In that case, how came you to be out, on foot and disguised, a few hours ago, in the Rue Soly?"

"What is the Rue Soly?" asked she, not a trace of emotion in her clear voice, not the faintest quiver in her features. She did not redden, she was quite composed.

"What! You did not go up the stairs to the second floor in a house at the corner of the Rue des Vieux-Augustins and the Rue Soly? You had not a cab waiting for you ten paces away? and you did not return to a shop in the Rue de Richelieu, where you chose the marabouts in your hair at this moment?"

"I did not leave my house this evening." She told the lie with an imperturbable laughing face; she fanned herself as she spoke; but any one who could have laid a hand on her girdle at the back, might perhaps have felt that it was damp. Auguste bethought himself of the Vidame's teaching.

"Then it was some one extraordinarily like you," he rejoined with an air of belief.

"Sir," said she, "if you are capable of following a woman about to detect her secrets, you will permit me to tell you that such a thing is wrong, very wrong, and I do you the honor of declining to believe it of you."

The Baron turned away, took up his position before the hearth, and seemed thoughtful. He bent his head, but his eyes were fixed stealthily upon Mme. Jules. She had for-

gotten the mirrors on the walls, and glanced toward him two or three times with an evident dread in her eyes. Then she beckoned to her husband, laid a hand upon his arm, and rose to go through the rooms. As she passed M. de Maulincour, who was talking with a friend, he said aloud as if in answer to a question: "A woman that certainly will not sleep quietly to-night—"

Mme. Jules stopped, flung him a crushing, disdainful glance, and walked away, all unaware that one more such glance, if her husband chanced to see it, would imperil her happiness and the lives of two men.

Auguste, consumed with rage smouldering in the depths of his soul, soon afterward left the room, vowing to get to the bottom of this intrigue. He looked round for Mme. Jules before he went, but she had disappeared. Here were the elements of a tragedy suddenly put into a young head, an eminently romantic head, as is generally the case with those who have not realized their dreamed-of love to the full. He adored Mme. Jules in a new aspect; he loved her with the fury of jealousy, with the agonized frenzy of despair. The woman was false to her husband; she had come down to the ordinary level. Auguste might give himself up to all the felicity of success, imagination opened out for him the vast field of the transports of possession. In short, if he had lost an angel, he had found the most tantalizing of devils. He lay down to build castles in the air and to justify Mme. Jules. Some errand of charity had brought her there, he told himself, but he did not believe it. He made up his mind to devote himself entirely to the investigation of the causes and motives involved in this mysteriously hidden knot. It was a romance to read; or rather it was a play to act, and he was cast for a part in it.

It is a very fine thing to play the detective for one's own ends and for passion's sake. Is it not an honest man's chance of enjoying the amusements of the thief? Still, you must be prepared to boil with helpless rage, to growl with impatience, to stand in mud till your feet are frozen, to

shiver and burn and choke down false hopes. You must follow up any indication to an end unknown; and miss your chance, storm, improvise lamentations and dithyrambs for your own benefit, and utter insensate exclamations before some harmless passer-by, who stares back at you in amazement. You take to your heels and overturn good souls with their apple-baskets, you wait and hang about under a window, you make guesses by the running hundred. Still it is sport, and Parisian sport; sport with all its accessories save dogs, and guns, and tally-ho. Nothing, except some moments in the gambler's life, can compare with it. A man's heart must needs be swelling with love and revenge before he will lie in ambush ready to spring like a tiger on his prey; before he can find enjoyment in watching all that goes on in the quarter; for interest of many kinds abounds in Paris without the added pleasure of stalking game. How should one soul suffice a man for all this? What is it but a life made up of a thousand passions, a thousand feelings, and thoughts?

Auguste de Maulincour flung himself heart and soul into this feverish life, because he felt all its troubles and joys. He went about Paris in disguise; he watched every corner of the Rue Pagevin and the Rue des Vieux-Augustins. He ran like a lamplighter from the Rue de Ménars to the Rue Soly, and back again from the Rue Soly to the Rue de Ménars, all unconscious of the punishment or the reward in store for so many pains, such measures, such shifts! and even so, he had not yet reached the degree of impatience which gnaws the vitals and brings the sweat to a man's brow; he hung about in hope. It occurred to him that Mme. Jules would scarcely risk another visit for some few days after detection. So he devoted those first few days to an initiation into the mysteries of the street. Being but a novice in the craft, he did not dare to go to the house itself and question the porter and the shoemaker; but he had hopes of securing a post of observation in rooms exactly opposite that inscrutable second floor. He made a

careful survey of the ground; he was trying to reconcile caution with impatience, his love, and the secret.

By the beginning of March he was in the midst of his preparations for making a great decisive move, when official duties summoned him from his chessboard one afternoon about four o'clock, after an assiduous course of sentry-duty, for which he was not a whit the wiser. In the Rue Coquillière he was caught by one of the heavy showers which swell the stream in the kennels in a moment, while every drop falling into the roadside puddles raises a bell-shaped splash. A foot-passenger in such a predicament is driven to take refuge in a shop or café if he can afford to pay for shelter; or, at urgent need, to hurry into some entry, the asylum of the poor and shabbily dressed. How is it that as yet no French painter has tried to give us that characteristic group, a crowd of Parisians weatherbound under an archway? Where will you find better material for a picture?

To begin with, is there not the pensive or philosophical pedestrian who finds a pleasure in watching the slantwise streaks of rain in the air against the gray background of sky—a fine chased work something like the whimsical shapes taken by spun glass? Or he looks up at the whirlpools of white water, blown by the wind like a luminous dust over the house-roofs, or at the fitful discharges of the wet, foaming stack-pipes. There are, in fact, a thousand nothings to wonder at, and the idlers are studying them with keen relish, although the owner of the premises treats them to occasional thumps from the broom-handle.

There is the chatty person who grumbles and talks with the porter's wife, while she rests on her broom as a grenadier leans on his gun; there is the poverty-stricken individual glued fantastically to the wall—he has nothing to dread from such contact; for his rags, they are already so well acquainted with the street; there is the man of education who studies, spells out, or even reads the advertisements, and never gets to the end of them; there is the

humorous person who laughs at mud-bedraggled women, and makes eyes at the people in the windows opposite; there is the mute refugee that scans every casement on every floor, and the working man or woman with a mallet or a bundle, as the case may be, translating the shower into probable losses or gains. Then there is the amiable man, who bounces in like a bombshell with an "Oh! what weather, gentlemen!" and raises his hat to the company; and, finally, there is your true Parisian bourgeois, a weather-wise citizen who never comes out without his umbrella; he knew beforehand that it was going to rain, but he came out in spite of his wife's advice, and now he is sitting in the porter's chair.

Each member of this chance-assembled group watches the sky in his own characteristic fashion, and then skips away for fear of splashing his boots, or goes because he is in a hurry and sees other citizens walking past in spite of wind and weather, or because the courtyard is damp and fit to give you your death of cold—the selvage, as the saying goes, being worse than the cloth. Every one has his own reasons for going, until no one is left but the prudent pedestrian, who waits to see a few blue chinks among the clouds before he goes on his way.

M. de Maulincour, therefore, took refuge with a tribe of foot-passengers under the porch of an old-fashioned house with a courtyard not unlike a gigantic chimney shaft. There were so many stories rising to a height on all sides, and the four plastered walls, covered with greenish stains and saltpetre ooze, were traversed by such a multitude of gutters and spouts, that they would have put you in mind of the cascades of St. Cloud. From every direction came the sound of falling water; it foamed, splashed, and gurgled; it gushed forth in streams, or black, or white, or blue, or green; it hissed and gathered volume under the broom wielded by the porter's wife, a toothless crone of great experience in storms, who seemed to bless the waters as she swept down a host of odds and ends into the street.

A curious inventory of the rubbish would have told you a good deal about the lives and habits of the lodgers on every floor. There were tea-leaves, cuttings of chintz, discolored and spoiled petals of artificial flowers, vegetable refuse, paper and scraps of metal. Every stroke of the old woman's broom laid bare the heart of the gutter, that black channel paved with chessboard squares, on which every porter wages desperate war. The luckless lover gazed intently at this picture, one of the many thousands which bustling Paris composes every day; but he saw it all with unseeing eyes, until he looked up and found himself face to face with a man that had just come in.

This man was, at any rate to all appearance, a beggar. Not a Parisian beggar, that human creature for which human speech has found no name as yet; but a novel type, a beggar cast in some different mold, and apart from all the associations called up by that word. The stranger was not by any means remarkable for that peculiarly Parisian character which frequently startles us in those unfortunates whom Charlet drew, and often enough with a rare felicity; the Paris beggar with the coarse face plastered with mud, the red bulbous nose, the toothless but menacing mouth, the eyes lighted up by a profound intelligence which seems out of place—a servile, terrific figure. Some of the impudent vagabonds have mottled, chapped, and veined countenances, rugged foreheads, and thin, dirty locks that put you in mind of a worn-out wig lying in the gutter. Jolly in their degradation and degraded amid their jollity, debauchery has set its unmistakable mark on them, they hurl their silence at you like a reproach, their attitude expresses appalling thoughts. They are ruthless, are these dwellers between beggary and crime; they circle at a safe distance round the gallows, steering clear of the law in the midst of vice, and vicious within the bounds of law. While they often provoke a smile, they set you thinking.

One, for instance, represents stunted civilization; he comprehends it all, thieves' honor, patriotism, and man-

hood, with the perverse ingenuity of the common criminal and the subtlety of kid-gloved rascality. Another is resigned to his lot; he is past master in mimicry, but a dull creature. None of them are exempt from passing fancies for work and thrift; but the social machinery thrusts them down into their filth, without caring to discover whether there may not be poets, or great men, or brave men, or a whole wonderful organization among the beggars in the streets, those gypsies of Paris. Like all masses of men who have suffered, the beggar tribes are supremely good and superlatively wicked; they are accustomed to endure nameless ills, and a fatal power keeps them on a level with the mud of the streets. And every one of them has a dream, a hope, a happiness of his own, which takes the shape of gambling, or the lottery, or drink.

There was nothing of this strange life about the man who was propping himself, very much at his ease, against the wall opposite M. de Maulincour; he looked like a fancy portrait sketched by an ingenious artist on the back of some canvas returned to the studio.

He was lank and lean; his leaden-hued visage revealed glacial depths of thought; his ironical bearing, and a dark look, which plainly conveyed his claim to treat every man as his equal, dried up any feeling of compassion in the hearts of the curious. His complexion was a dingy white; his wrinkled, hairless head bore a vague resemblance to a block of granite. A few grizzled, lank locks on either side of his face straggled over the collar of a filthy greatcoat buttoned up to the chin. There was something of a Voltaire about him, something too of a Don Quixote; melancholy, scornful, sarcastic, full of philosophical ideas, but half insane. Apparently he wore no shirt. His beard was long. His shabby black cravat was so slit and worn that it left his neck on exhibition, and a protuberant, deeply furrowed throat, on which the thick veins stood out like cords. There were wide, dark bruised circles about his eyes. He must have been at least sixty years old. His

hands were white and clean. His shoes were full of holes, and trodden down at the heels. A pair of much-mended blue trousers, covered with a kind of pale fluff, added to the squalor of his appearance.

Perhaps the man's wet clothes exhaled a nauseous smell; perhaps at any time he had about him that odor of poverty peculiar to Paris slums—for slums, like offices, vestries, and hospitals, have a special smell, and a stale, fetid, unimaginable reek it is. At any rate, the man's neighbors edged away and left him alone. He glanced round at them, and then at the officer; it was an unmoved, expressionless look, the look for which M. de Talleyrand was so famous, a survey made by lack-lustre eyes with no warmth in them. Such a look is an inscrutable veil beneath which a strong mind can hide deep feeling, and the most accurate calculations as to men, affairs, and events. Not a wrinkle deepened in his countenance. Mouth and forehead were alike impassive, but his eyes fell, and there was something noble, almost tragic, in their slow movement. A whole drama lay in that droop of the withered eyelids.

The sight of this stoical face started M. de Maulincour upon those musings that begin with some commonplace question and wander off into a whole world of ideas before they end. The storm was over and gone. M. de Maulincour saw no more of the man than the skirts of his greatcoat trailing on the curbstone; but as he turned to go, he saw that a letter had just dropped at his feet, and guessed that it belonged to the stranger, for he had noticed that he put a bandanna handkerchief back into his pocket. M. de Maulincour picked up the letter to return it to its owner, and unthinkingly read the address:

À Mosieur.

Mosieur Ferragusse,

Rue des Grands-Augustins, au coing de la Rue Soly.

Paris.

There was no stamp on the letter, and at sight of the direction M. de Maulincour hesitated to return it; for there are few passions which will not turn base in the long length. Some presentiment of the opportuneness of the treasure-trove crossed the Baron's mind. He would keep the letter, and so acquire a right to enter the mysterious house, never doubting but that the man lived therein. Even now a suspicion, vague as the beginnings of daylight, connected the stranger with Mme. Jules. Jealous lovers will suppose anything; and it is by this very process of supposing everything and selecting the more probable conjectures that examining magistrates, spies, lovers, and observers get at the truth which they have an interest in discovering.

"Does the letter belong to him? Is it from Mme. Jules?"

His uneasy imagination flung a host of questions to him at once, but at the first words of the letter he smiled. Here it follows word for word in the glory of its artless phrases; it was impossible to add anything to it, and short of omitting the letter itself, nothing could be taken away. It has been necessary, however, to revise the orthography and the punctuation; for in the original there are neither commas nor stops, nor so much as a note of exclamation, a fact that strikes at the root of the system by which modern authors endeavor to render the effect of the great disasters of every kind of passion:

"HENRY" (so it ran), "of all the things that I have had to give up for your sake, this is the hardest, that I mayn't give you news of myself. There is a voice that I must obey, which tells me I ought to let you know all the wrong you've done me. I know beforehand that you are that hardened by vice that you will not stoop to pity me. Your heart must be deaf to all feeling; is it not deaf to the cry of nature? Not that it matters much. I am bound to let you know the degree to which you are to blame, and the horror of the posi-

tion in which you have put me. You knew how I suffered for my first fall, Henry, yet you could bring me to the same pass again, and leave me in my pain and despair. Yes, I own I used to think you loved and respected me, and that helped me to bear up. And now what is left to me? I have lost all that I cared most about, all that I lived for, friends, and relations, and character, and all through you. I have given up everything for you, and now I have nothing before me but shame and disgrace and, I don't blush to say it, want. It only needed your scorn and hatred to make my misery complete; and now I have that as well, I shall have courage to carry out my plans. I have made up my mind—it's for the credit of my family—I shall put an end to my troubles. You must not think hardly of the thing that I am going to do, Henry. It is wicked, I know, but I can't help myself. No help, no money, no sweetheart to comfort me—can I live? No, I can't. What must be, must. So in two days, Henry, two days from now, your Ida will not be worthy of your respect; but take back the solemn promise I made you, so as I may have an easy conscience, for I shall not be unworthy of your friendship. Oh, Henry, my friend, for I shall never change to you, promise to forgive me for the life I'm going to lead. It is love that gives me courage, and it is love that will keep me right. My heart will be so full of your image that I shall still be true to you. I pray Heaven on my bended knees not to punish you for all the wrong you have done, for I feel that there is only one thing wanting among my troubles, and that is the pain of knowing that you are unhappy. In spite of my plight, I will not take any help from you. If you had cared about me, I might have taken anything as coming from friendship; but my soul rises up against a kindness as comes from pity, and I should demean myself more by taking it than him that offered it. I have one favor to ask. I don't know how long I shall have to stop with Mme. Meynardie, but be generous enough to keep out of my sight there. Your last two visits hurt me so that it was a long time before I got over it; but I don't mean to

go into any particulars of your behavior in that respect. You hate me; the words are written on my heart, and freeze it with cold. Alas! just when I want all my courage, my wits desert me. Henry dear, before I put this bar between us, let me know for the last time that you respect me still; write to me, send me an answer, say that you respect me if you don't love me any more. I shall always be able to look you in the face, but I don't ask for a sight of you; I am so weak, and I love you so, that I don't know what I might do. But, for pity's sake, write me a line at once; it will give me courage to bear my misery. Farewell, you have brought all my troubles upon me, but you are the one friend that my heart chose, and will never forget. IDA."

This girl's life, her disappointed love, her ill-starred joys, her grief, her dreadful resignation to her lot, the story summed up in so few words, produced a moment's effect upon M. de Maulincour. He asked himself, as he read the obscure but essentially Parisian tragedy written upon the soiled sheet, whether this Ida might not be connected in some way with Mme. Jules; whether the assignation that he chanced to witness that evening was not some charitable effort on her part. Could that aged, poverty-stricken man be Ida's betrayer? . . . The thing bordered on the marvellous. Amusing himself in a maze of involved and incompatible ideas, the Baron reached the neighborhood of the Rue Pagevin just in time to see a cab stop at the end of the Rue des Vieux-Augustins nearest the Rue Montmartre. Every cabman on the stand had something to say to the new arrival.

"Can *she* be in it?" he thought.

His heart beat with hot, feverish throbs. He pushed open the wicket with the tinkling bell, but he lowered his head as he entered; he felt ashamed of himself, a voice in his inmost soul cried, "Why meddle in this mystery?"

At the top of a short flight of steps he confronted the old woman.

"M. Ferragus?"

"Don't know the name—"

"What! Doesn't M. Ferragus live here?"

"No name of the sort in the house."

"But, my good woman—"

"I'm not a 'good woman,' sir, I am a portress."

"But, madame, I have a letter here for M. Ferragus."

"Oh! if you have a letter, sir," said she, with a change of tone, "that is quite another thing. Will you just let me look at your letter?"

Auguste produced the folded sheet. The old woman shook her head dubiously over it, hesitated, and seemed on the point of leaving her lodge to acquaint the mysterious Ferragus with this unexpected incident. At last she said, "Very well, go upstairs, sir. You ought to know your way up—"

Without staying to answer a remark which the cunning crone possibly meant as a trap, M. de Maulincour bounded up the stairs and rang loudly at the second-floor door. His lover's instinct told him, "*She* is here."

The stranger of the archway, the man who "had brought Ida's troubles upon her," answered the door himself, and showed a clean countenance, a flowered gown, a pair of white flannel trousers, and a neat pair of carpet slippers. Mme. Jules's face appeared behind him in the doorway of the inner room; she grew white, and dropped into a chair.

"What is the matter, madame?" exclaimed Auguste, as he sprang toward her.

But Ferragus stretched out an arm and stopped the young man short with such a well-delivered blow that Auguste reeled as if an iron bar had struck him on the chest.

"Stand back, sir! What do you want with us? You have been prowling about the quarter these five or six days. Perhaps you are a detective?"

"Are you M. Ferragus?" retorted the Baron.

"No, sir."

"At any rate, it is my duty to return this paper which

you dropped under an archway where we both took shelter from the rain."

As he spoke and held out the letter, he glanced round the room in spite of himself. Ferragus's room was well but plainly furnished. There was a fire in the grate. A table was set, more sumptuously than the man's apparent position and the low rent of the house seemed to warrant. And lastly, he caught a glimpse of a heap of gold coins on a settee just inside the next room, and heard a sound from thence which could only be a woman's sobbing.

"The letter is mine, thank you," said the stranger, turning round in a way intended to convey the hint that the Baron had better go, and that at once.

Too inquisitive to notice that he himself was being submitted to a thorough scrutiny, Auguste did not see the semi-magnetic glances, the devouring gaze which the stranger turned on him. If he had met those basilisk eyes, he would have seen his danger, but he was too violently in love to think of himself. He raised his hat, went downstairs, and back to his own home. What could a meeting of three such persons as Ida, Ferragus, and Mme. Jules mean? He might as well have taken up a Chinese puzzle, and tried to fit the odd-shaped bits of wood together without a clew.

But Mme. Jules had seen him; Mme. Jules went to the house; Mme. Jules had lied to him. Next day he would call upon her; she would not dare to refuse to see him; he was now her accomplice; he was hand and foot in this shady intrigue. Already he began to play the sultan, and thought how he would summon Mme. Jules to deliver up all her secrets.

Paris was afflicted in those days with a rage for building. If Paris is a monster, it is assuredly of all monsters the most subject to sudden rage. The city takes up with a thousand whimsies. Sometimes Paris begins to build like some great lord with a passion for bricks and mortar; then the trowel is dropped in an attack of military fever, every one turns out in a National Guard's uniform, and goes through the drill and smokes cigars, but the fit does not last; martial exercises

are suddenly abandoned, and the cigar is thrown away. Then Paris begins to feel low, becomes insolvent, sells its effects in the Place du Châtelet, and files its petition; but in a few days all is straight again, and the city puts on festival array and dances. One day the city fills hands and mouth with barley sugar, yesterday it bought Papier Weynen; to-day the monster has the toothache, and plasters every wall with advertisements of Alexipharmaques, and to-morrow it will lay in a store of cough lozenges. Paris has the craze of the season or of the month as well as the rage of the day; and at this particular time everybody was building or pulling down something. What they built or pulled down no one knows to this day, but there was scarce a street in which you did not see erections of scaffolding, poles, planks, and cross-bars lashed together at every story. The fragile structures, covered with white plaster dust, quivered under the tread of the Limousin bricklayers and shook with the vibrations of every passing carriage in spite of the protection of wooden hoardings, which people are bound to erect round the monumental buildings that never rise above their foundations. There is a nautical suggestion about the mast-like poles and ladders and rigging and the shouts of the bricklayers.

One of these temporary erections stood not a dozen paces away from the Hotel Maulincour, in front of a house that was being built of blocks of freestone. Next day, just as the Baron de Maulincour's cab passed by the scaffolding on the way to Mme. Jules, a block two feet square slipped from its rope cradle at the top of the pole, turned a somersault, fell, and killed the man-servant at the back of the vehicle. A cry of terror shook the scaffolding and the bricklayers. One of the two, in peril of his neck, could scarcely cling to the pole; it seemed that the block struck him in passing. A crowd quickly gathered The men came down in a body, with shouts and oaths, declaring that M. de Maulincour's cab had shaken their crane. Two inches more, and the stone would have fallen on the Baron's head. It was an event in the quarter. It got into the newspapers.

M. de Maulincour, sure that he had touched nothing, brought an action for damages. The law stepped in. It turned out upon inquiry that a boy with a wooden bat had mounted guard to warn passengers to give the building a wide berth, and with that the affair came to an end. M. de Maulincour must even put up with the loss of his man-servant and the fright that he had had. He kept his bed for several days, for he had been bruised by the breakage of the cab, and he was feverish after the shock to his nerves. So there was no visit paid to Mme. Jules.

Ten days later, when he went out of doors for the first time, he drove to the Bois de Boulogne in the now repaired cab. He turned down the Rue de Bourgogne, and had reached the sewer just opposite the Chamber of Deputies, when the axle snapped in the middle. The Baron was driving so fast that the two wheels swerved and met with a shock that must have fractured his skull if it had not been for the hood of the vehicle, and, as it was, he sustained serious injury to the ribs. So for the second time in ten days he was brought home more dead than alive to the weeping dowager.

This second accident aroused his suspicions. He thought vaguely, however, of Mme. Jules and Ferragus; and by way of clearing up his suspicions, he had the broken axle brought into his bedroom, and sent for his coach-builder. The man inspected the fracture, and proved two things to M. Maulincour's mind. First, that the axle never came from his establishment, for he made a practice of cutting his initials roughly on every one that he supplied. How this axle had been exchanged for the previous one he was at a loss to explain. And secondly, he found that there was a very ingeniously contrived flaw in the iron bar, a kind of cavity made by a blowpipe while the metal was hot.

"Eh! M. le Baron, a man had need to be pretty clever to turn out an axle-bar on that pattern; you could swear it was natural—"

M. de Maulincour asked the man to keep his own counsel, and considered that he had had a sufficient warning.

The two attempts on his life had been plotted with a skill which showed that his were no common enemies.

"It is a war of extermination," said he, turning restlessly on his bed, "a warfare of savages, ambushes, and treachery, a war declared in the name of Mme. Jules. In whose hands is she? And what power can this Ferragus wield?"

M. de Maulincour, brave man and soldier though he was, could not help shivering when all was done and said. Among the thoughts that beset him, there was one which found him defenceless and afraid. How if these mysterious enemies of his should resort next to poison? Terror, exaggerated by fever and low diet, got the better of him in his weak condition. He sent for an old attached servant of his grandmother's, a woman who loved him with that almost motherly affection through which an ordinary nature reaches the sublime. Without telling her all that was in his mind, he bade her buy all necessary articles of food for him, secretly, and every day at a fresh place; and at the same time, he warned her to keep everything under lock and key, and to allow no one whatsoever to be present while she prepared his meals. In short, he took the most minute precautions against this kind of death. He was lying ill in bed; he had therefore full leisure to consider his best way of defending himself, and love of life is the only craving sufficiently clairvoyant to allow human egoism to forget nothing. But the luckless patient had himself poisoned his own life with dread. Every hour was overshadowed by a gloomy suspicion that he could not throw off. Still, the two lessons in murder had taught him one qualification indispensable to a politic man; he understood how greatly dissimulation is needed in the complex action of the great interests of life. To keep a secret is nothing; but to be silent beforehand, to forget, if necessary, for thirty years, like Ali Pacha, the better to insure a revenge pondered during those thirty years—this is a fine study in a country where few men can dissemble for thirty days together.

By this time Mme. Jules was Auguste de Maulincour's whole life. His mind was always intently examining the

means by which he might win a triumph in his mysterious duel with unknown antagonists. His desire for this woman grew the greater by every obstacle. Amid all his thoughts Mme. Jules was always present in his heart of hearts; there she stood more irresistible now in her imputed sin than she used to be with all the undoubted virtues for which he once had worshipped her.

The sick man, wishing to reconnoitre the enemy's position, thought there could be no danger in letting the old Vidame into the secret. The Vidame loved Auguste as a father loves his wife's children; he was shrewd and adroit, he was of a diplomatic turn of mind. So the Vidame came, heard the Baron's story, and shook his head, and the two held counsel. Auguste maintained that in the days in which they lived, the detective force and the powers that be were equal to finding out any mysteries, and that if there was absolutely no other way, the police would prove powerful auxiliaries. The Vidame did not share his young friend's confidence or his convictions.

"The police are the biggest bunglers on earth, dear boy, and the powers that be are the feeblest of all things where individuals are concerned. Neither the authorities nor the police can get to the bottom of people's minds. If they discover the causes of a fact, that is all that can reasonably be expected of them. Now the authorities and the police are eminently unsuited to a business of this kind; the personal interest which is not satisfied till everything is found out is essentially lacking in them. No human power can prevent a murderer or a poisoner from reaching a prince's heart or an honest man's stomach. It is passion that makes the complete detective."

With that the Vidame strongly advised his young friend the Baron to travel. Let him go to Italy, and from Italy to Greece, and from Greece to Syria and Asia, and come back only when his mysterious enemies should be convinced of his repentance. In his way he would conclude a tacit peace with them. Or, if he stayed, he had better keep to his house.

and even to his room, since there he could secure himself against the attacks of this Ferragus, and never leave it except to crush the enemy once for all.

"A man should never touch his enemy except to smite off his head," the Vidame said gravely.

Nevertheless, the old man promised his favorite that he would bring all the astuteness with which Heaven had gifted him to bear on the case, and that, without committing any one, he would send a reconnoitring party into the enemy's camp, know all that went on there, and prepare a victory.

The Vidame had in his service a retired Figaro, as mischievous a monkey as ever took human shape. In former times the man had been diabolically clever, and a convict's physical frame could not have responded better to all demands made upon it; he was agile as a thief, and subtle as a woman, but he had fallen into the decadence of genius for want of practice. New social conditions in Paris have reformed away the old valets of comedy. This emeritus Scapin was attached to his master as to a being of superior order; but the crafty Vidame used to increase the annual wage of his sometime provost of gallantry by a tolerably substantial sum, in such sort that the natural ties of goodwill were strengthened by the bond of interest, and the old Vidame received in return such watchful attention as the tenderest of mistresses could scarcely devise in a lover's illness. In this relic of the eighteenth century, this pearl of old world stage servants, this minister incorruptible (since all his desires were gratified)—the Vidame and M. de Maulincour both put their trust.

"M. le Baron would spoil it all," said the great man in livery, summoned to the council. "Let Monsieur eat and drink and sleep in peace. I will take it all upon myself."

And indeed, a week afterward, when M. de Maulincour, now perfectly recovered, was breakfasting with his grandmother and the Vidame, Justin appeared to make his report. The dowager went back to her rooms, and he began with that false modesty which men of genius affect:

"Ferragus is not the real name of the enemy in pursuit of M. le Baron. The man, the devil rather, is called Gratien Henri Victor Jean Joseph Bourignard. The said Gratien Bourignard used to be a builder and contractor; he was a very rich man at one time; and most of all, he was one of the prettiest fellows in Paris, a Lovelace that might have led Grandison himself astray. My information goes no further. He once was a common workman; the journeymen of the order of Dévorants elected him as their head, with the name of Ferragus XXIII. The police should know that, if they are there to know anything. The man has moved, and at present is lodging in the Rue Joquelet. Mme. Jules Desmarets often goes to see him. Her husband pretty often sets her down in the Rue Vivienne on his way to the Bourse; or she leaves her husband at the Bourse, and comes back that way. M. le Vidame knows so much in these matters that he will not expect me to tell him whether the husband rules the wife, or the wife rules her husband, but Mme. Jules is so pretty that I should bet on her. All this is absolutely certain. My Bourignard often goes to gamble at number 129. He is a gay dog, with a liking for women, saving your presence, and has his amours like a man of condition. As for the rest, he is frequently in luck, he makes up like an actor, and can make any grimace he likes; he just leads the queerest life you ever heard of. He has several addresses, I have no doubt, for he nearly always escapes what M. le Vidame calls 'parliamentary investigation.' If monsieur wishes, however, the man can be got rid of decently, leading such a life as he does. It is always easy to get rid of a man with a weakness for women. Still the capitalist is talking of moving again.—Now, have M. le Vidame and M. le Baron any orders to give?"

"I am pleased with you, Justin. Go no further in the affair without instructions, but keep an eye on everything here, so that M. le Baron shall have nothing to fear." He turned to Maulincour. "Live as before, dear boy," he said, "and forget Mme. Jules."

"No, no," said Auguste, "I will not give her up to Gratien Bourignard; I mean to have him bound hand and foot and Mme. Jules as well."

That evening Auguste de Maulincour, recently promoted to a higher rank in the Guards, went to a ball in Mme. la Duchesse de Berri's apartment at the Elysée-Bourbon. There, surely, there was no fear of the slightest danger; and yet, the Baron de Maulincour came away with an affair of honor on his hands, and no hope of arranging it. His antagonist, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, had the strongest reasons for complaining of him; the quarrel arose out of an old flirtation with M. de Ronquerolles's sister, the Comtesse de Sérizy. This lady, who could not endure high-flown German sentiment, was all the more particular with regard to every detail of the prude's costume in which she appeared in public. Some fatal inexplicable prompting moved Auguste to make a harmless joke, Mme. de Sérizy took it in very bad part, and her brother took offence. Explanations took place in whispers in a corner of the room. Both behaved like men of the world, there was no fuss of any kind; and not till next day did the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and the Chateau hear what had happened. Mme. de Sérizy was warmly defended; all the blame was thrown on Maulincour. August persons intervened. Seconds of the highest rank were imposed on M. de Maulincour and M. de Ronquerolles; every precaution was taken on the ground to prevent a fatal termination.

Auguste's antagonist was a man of pleasure, not wanting, as every one admitted, in a sense of honor; it was impossible to think of the Marquis as a tool in the hands of Ferragus, Chef des Dévorants; and yet as Auguste de Maulincour stood up before his man, in his own mind he felt a wish to obey an unaccountable instinct, and to put a question to him.

"Gentlemen," he said, addressing his seconds, "I emphatically do not refuse to stand M. de Ronquerolles's fire; but, first, I own that I was in fault, I will make the apology which he is sure to require, and even in public if he wishes

it; for when a lady is in the case, there is nothing, I think, dishonoring to a gentleman in such an apology. So I appeal to his common-sense and generosity; isn't there something rather senseless in fighting a duel when the better cause may happen to get the worst of it?"

But M. de Ronquerolles would not hear of such a way out of the affair. The Baron's suspicions were confirmed. He went across to his opponent.

"Well, M. le Marquis," he said, "will you pledge me your word as a noble, before these gentlemen, that you bear me no grudge save the one for which ostensibly we are to fight?"

"Monsieur, that is a question which ought not to be put to me."

M. de Ronquerolles returned to his place. It was agreed beforehand that only one shot should be fired on either side. The antagonists were so far apart that a fatal end for M. de Maulincour seemed problematical, not to say impossible; but Auguste dropped. The bullet had passed through his ribs, missing the heart by two finger-breadths. Luckily, the extent of the injury was not great.

"This was no question of revenge for a dead passion; you aimed too well, monsieur, for that," said a Guardsman.

M. de Ronquerolles, thinking that he had killed his man, could not keep back a sardonic smile.

"Julius Cæsar's sister, monsieur, must be above suspicion."

"Mme. Jules again!" exclaimed Auguste, and he fainted away before he could finish the caustic sarcasm that died on his lips. He had lost a good deal of blood, but his wound was not dangerous. For a fortnight his grandmother and the Vidame nursed him with the lavish care which none but the old, wise with the experience of a lifetime, can give. Then one morning he received a rude shock. It came from his grandmother. She told him that her old age, the last days of her life, were filled with deadly anxiety. A letter addressed to her and signed "F." gave her the history of the

espionage to which her grandson had stooped; it was given in full from point to point. M. de Maulincour was accused of conduct unworthy of a man of honor. He had posted an old woman (so it was stated) near the cabstand in the Rue de Ménars. Nominally his wrinkled spy supplied water to the cabmen, but really she was stationed there to watch Mme. Jules Desmarets. He had deliberately set himself to play the detective on one of the most harmless men in the world, and tried to find out all about him when secrets which concerned the lives of three persons were involved. Of his own accord he had entered upon a pitiless struggle, in which he had been wounded three times already, and must inevitably succumb at last; for his death had been sworn; every human power would be exerted to compass it. It was too late for M. de Maulincour to escape his doom by a promise to respect the mysterious life of these three persons; for it was impossible to believe the word of a gentleman who could sink so low as to make himself an agent of police. And for what reason? To disturb, without cause, the existence of an innocent woman and a respectable old man.

The letter was as nothing to Auguste compared with the Baronne de Maulincour's loving reproaches. How could he fail to trust and respect a woman? How could he play the spy on her when he had no right to do so? Had any man a right to spy on the woman who loved him? There followed a torrent of excellent reasoning which never proves anything. It put the young man for the first time of his life into one of those towering passions from which the most decisive actions of life are apt to spring.

"If this is to be a duel to the death" (so he concluded), "I am justified in using every means in my power to kill my enemy."

Forthwith the Vidame, on behalf of M. de Maulincour, waited on the superintendent of the detective force in Paris, and gave him a full account of the adventure, without bringing Mme. Jules's name into the story, although she was the secret knot of all the threads. He told him, in confidence,

of the fears of the Maulincour family, thus threatened by some unknown person, an enemy daring enough to vow such vengeance on an officer in the Guards, in the teeth of the law and the police. He of the police was so much surprised that he raised his green spectacles, blew his nose two or three times, and offered his mull to the Vidame, who said, to save his dignity, that he never took snuff, though his countenance was bedabbled with rappee. The head of the department took his notes, and promised that, with the help of Vidocq and his sleuth hounds, the enemy of the Maulincour family should be accounted for in a very short time; there were no mysteries, so he was pleased to say, for the Paris police.

A few days afterward, the superintendent came to the Hotel Maulincour to see M. le Vidame, and found the Baron perfectly recovered from his last injuries. He thanked the family in formal style for the particulars which they had been so good as to communicate, and informed them that the man Bourignard was a convict sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude, and that in some miraculous way he made his escape from the gang on the way from Bicetre to Toulon. The police had made fruitless efforts to catch him for the past fifteen years; they learned that he had very recklessly come back to live in Paris; and there, though he was constantly implicated in all sorts of shady affairs, hitherto he had eluded the most active search. To cut it short, the man, whose life presented a great many most curious details, was certain to be seized at one of his numerous addresses and given up to justice. This red-tape personage concluded his official report with the remark that if M. de Maulincour attached sufficient importance to the affair to care to be present at Bourignard's capture, he might repair to such and such a number in the Rue Sainte-Foi at eight o'clock next morning. M. de Maulincour, however, felt that he could dispense with this method of making certain; he shared the feeling of awe which the police inspires in Paris; he felt every confidence in the diligence of the local authorities.

Three days afterward, as he saw nothing in the news-

papers about an arrest which surely would have supplied material for an interesting article, M. de Maulincour was beginning to feel uncomfortable, when the following letter relieved his mind:

"MONSIEUR LE BARON—I have the honor to announce that you need no longer entertain any fears whatsoever with regard to the matter in hand. The man Gratien Bourignard, alias Ferragus, died yesterday at his address, number 7 Rue Joquelet. The suspicions which we were bound to raise as to his identity were completely set at rest by facts. The doctor of the prefecture was specially sent by us to act in concert with the doctor of the mayor's office, and the superintendent of the preventive police made all the necessary verifications, so that the identity of the body might be established beyond question. The personal character, moreover, of the witnesses who signed the certificate of death, and the confirmatory evidence of those who were present at the time of the said Bourignard's death—including that of the curé of the Bonne-Nouvelle, to whom he made a last confession (for he made a Christian end)—all these things taken together do not permit us to retain the slightest doubt.

"Permit me, M. le Baron," etc.

M. de Maulincour, the dowager, and the Vidame drew a breath of unspeakable relief. She, good woman, kissed her grandson, while a tear stole down her cheeks, and then crept away to give thanks to God. The dear dowager had made a nine days' prayer for Auguste's safety, and believed that she had been heard.

"Well," said the Vidame, "now you can go to that ball that you were speaking about; I have no more objections to make."

M. de Maulincour was the more eager to go to this ball since Mme. Jules was sure to be there. It was an entertainment given by the Prefect of the Seine in whose house the two worlds of Paris society met as on a neutral ground.

Auguste de Maulincour went quickly through the rooms, but the woman who exerted so great an influence on his life was not to be seen. He went into a still empty card-room, where the tables awaited players, sat himself down on a sofa, and gave himself up to the most contradictory thoughts of Mme. Jules, when some one grasped him by the arm; and, to his utter amazement, he beheld the beggar of the Rue Coquillière, Ida's Ferragus, the man who lived in the Rue Soly, Justin's Bourignard, the convict that had died the day before.

"Not a sound, not a word, sir!" said Bourignard. Auguste knew that voice, though to any other it would surely have seemed unrecognizable.

The man was very well dressed; he wore the insignia of the Golden Fleece and the star of the Legion of Honor.

"Sir," he hissed out like a hyena, "you warrant all my attempts on your life by allying yourself with the police. You shall die, sir. There is no help for it. Are you in love with Mme. Jules? Did she once love you? What right have you to trouble her peace and smirch her reputation?"

Somebody else came up. Ferragus rose to go.

"Do you know this man?" asked M. de Maulincour, seizing Ferragus by the collar.

But Ferragus slipped briskly out of his grasp, caught M. de Maulincour by the hair, and shook him playfully several times.

"Is there absolutely nothing but a dose of lead that will bring you to your senses?" he replied.

"I am not personally acquainted with him," said de Marsay, who had witnessed this scene, "but I know that this gentleman is M. de Funcal, a very rich Portuguese."

M. de Funcal had vanished. The Baron went off in pursuit, he could not overtake him, but he reached the peristyle in time to see a splendid equipage and the sneer on Ferragus's face, before he was whirled away out of sight.

"For pity's sake, tell me where M. de Funcal lives," said

Auguste, betaking himself to de Marsay, who happened to be an acquaintance.

"I do not know, but somebody here no doubt can tell you."

In answer to a question put to the Prefect, Auguste learned that the Comte de Funcal's address was at the Portuguese embassy. At that moment, while he fancied that he could still feel those ice-cold fingers in his hair, he saw Mme. Jules, in all the splendor of that beauty, fresh, graceful, unaffected, radiant with the sanctity of womanhood, which drew him to her at the first. For him this creature was infernal; Auguste felt nothing for her now but hate—hate that overflowed in murderous, terrible glances. He watched for an opportunity of speaking to her alone.

"Madame," he said, "three times already your bravoes have missed me—"

"What do you mean, sir?" she answered, reddening. "I heard with much concern that several bad accidents had befallen you; but how can I have had anything to do with them?"

"Then you know that the man in the Rue Soly has hired ruffians on my track?"

"Sir!"

"Madame, henceforth I must call you to account not only for my happiness, but also for my life-blood—"

Jules Desmarets came up at that moment.

"What are you saying to my wife, sir?"

"Come to my house to inquire if you are curious to know." And Maulincour went. Mme. Jules looked white and ready to faint.

There are very few women who have not been called upon, once in their lives, to face a definite, pointed, trenchant question with regard to some undeniable fact, one of those questions which a husband puts in a pitiless way. The bare thought of it sends a cold shiver through a woman: the first word pierces her heart like a steel blade. Hence the axiom, "All women are liars." They tell lies to spare the

feelings of others, white lies, heroic lies, hideous lies; but falsehood is incumbent upon them. Once admit this, does it not follow of necessity that the lies ought to be well told? Women tell lies to admiration in France. Our manners are an excellent school for dissimulation. And, after all, women are so artlessly insolent, so charming, so graceful, so true amid falsehood, so perfectly well aware of the value of insincerity as a means of avoiding the rude shocks which put happiness in peril, that falsehood is as indispensable to them as cotton wool for their jewelry. Insincerity furnishes forth the staple of their talk, and truth is only brought out occasionally. They speak truth, as they are virtuous, from caprice or speculation. The methods vary with the individual character. Some women laugh and lie, others weep, or grow grave, or put themselves in a passion.

They begin life with a feigned indifference to the homage which gratifies them most; they often end by insincerity with themselves. Who has not admired their seeming loftiness when they are trembling the while for the mysterious treasure of love? Who has not studied the ease, the ready wit, the mental disengagement with which they confront the greatest embarrassments of life? Everything is quite natural; deceit flows out as snowflakes fall from the sky.

And yet what skill women have to discover the truth in another! How subtly they can use the hardest logic, in answer to the passionately uttered question that never fails to yield up some heart secret belonging to their interlocutor, if a man is so guileless as to begin with questioning a woman. If a man begins to question a woman, he delivers himself into her hand. Will she not find out anything that he means to hide, while she talks and says nothing? And yet there are men that have the audacity to enter upon a contest of wits with a Parisienne—a woman who can put herself out of reach of a thrust with "You are very inquisitive!"—"What does it matter to you?"—"Oh! you are jealous!"—"And how if I do not choose to answer you?" A Parisienne, in short, has a hundred and thirty-seven thousand ways of say-

ing No, while her variations on the word YES surpass computation. Surely one of the finest diplomatic, philosophic, logographic, and moral performances which remain to be made would be a treatise on No and Yes. But who save an androgynous being could accomplish the diabolical feat? For which reason it will never be attempted. Yet of all unpublished works, is there one better known or more constantly in use among women?

Have you ever studied the conduct, the pose, the *disinvoltura* of a lie? Look at it now. Mme. Jules was sitting in the right-hand corner of her carriage, and her husband to her left. She had contrived to repress her emotion as she left the ballroom, and by this time her face was quite composed. Her husband had said nothing to her then; he said nothing now. Jules was staring out of the window at the dark walls of the silent houses as they drove past; but suddenly, just as they turned the corner of a street, he seemed to come to some determination, he looked intently at his wife. She seemed to feel cold in spite of the fur-lined pelisse in which she was wrapped; she looked pensive, he thought, and perhaps she really was pensive. Of all subtly communicable moods, gravity and reflection are the most contagious.

"What can M. de Maulincour have said to move you so deeply?" began Jules. "And what is this that he wishes me to hear at his house?"

"Why, he can tell you nothing at his house that I cannot tell you now," she replied.

And with that woman's subtlety, which is always slightly dishonoring to virtue, Mme. Jules waited for another question. But her husband turned his head away and resumed his study of arched gateways. Would it not mean suspicion and distrust if he asked any more? It is a crime in love to suspect a woman; and Jules had already killed a man, without a doubt of his wife. Clémence did not know how much deep passion and reflection lay beneath her husband's silence; and little did Jules imagine the extraordinary drama which

locked his wife's heart from him. And the carriage went on and on through silent Paris, and the husband and wife, two lovers who idolized each other, nestled softly and closely together among the silken cushions, a deep gulf yawning between them all the while.

How many strange scenes take place in the elegant broughams which pass through the streets between midnight and one o'clock in the morning after a ball! The carriages alluded to, be it understood, are fitted with transparent panes of glass, and lanterns that not merely light up the brougham itself, but the whole street as well on either side; they belong to law-sanctioned love, and the law gives a man a right to sulk and fall out with his wife, and kiss and make it up again, in a brougham or anywhere else. So married couples are at liberty to quarrel without fear of being seen by passers-by. And how many secrets are revealed to foot-passengers in the dark streets, to the young bachelors who drove to the ball and, for some reason or other, are walking home afterward! For the first time in their lives, Jules and Clémence leaned back in their corners; usually Desmarets pressed close to his wife's side.

"It is very cold," said Mme. Jules. But her husband heard nothing; he was intent on reading all the dark signs above the shops.

"Clémence," he began at last, "forgive me for this question that I am about to ask?"

He came nearer, put his arm about her waist, and drew her toward him.

"Oh, dear! here it comes!" thought poor Clémence.

"Well," she said aloud, anticipating the question, "you wish to know what M. de Maulincour was saying to me? I will tell you, Jules; but, I am afraid. Ah, God! can we have secrets from each other? A moment ago I knew that you were struggling between the consciousness that we love each other and a vague dread; but that consciousness that we love each other is unclouded, is it not? and do not your doubts seem very shadowy to you? Why not

stay in the light that you love? When I have told you everything, you will wish to know more; and, after all, I myself do not know what is lurking under that man's strange words. And then, perhaps, there would be a duel, ending in a death. I would far rather that we both put that unpleasant moment out of our minds. But in any case, give me your word to wait till this extraordinary adventure is cleared up in some natural way.

"M. de Maulincour declared that those three accidents of which you heard—the block of stone that killed his servant, the carriage accident, and the duel about Mme. de Sérizy—were all brought upon him by a plot which *I* have woven against him. And he threatened to explain my reasons for wishing to murder him to you.

"Can you make anything out of all this? It was his face that disturbed me; there was madness in it; his eyes were haggard; he was so excited that he could not bring out his words. I felt sure that he was mad. That was all. Now, I should not be a woman if I did not know that, for a year past, M. de Maulincour has been, as they say, quite wild about me. He has never met me except at dances; we have never exchanged any words but ballroom small talk. Perhaps he wants to separate us, so that I may be left defenceless and alone some day. You see how it is! You are frowning already. Oh, I detest the world with all my heart! We are so happy without it, why should we go in search of society?—Jules, I beg of you, promise me that you will forget all this! I expect we shall hear to-morrow that M. de Maulincour has gone out of his mind."

"What an extraordinary thing!" said Jules to himself, as he stepped out into the peristyle of his own abode.

And here, if this story is to be developed by giving it in all its truth of detail, by following its course through all its intricacies, there must be a revelation of some of the secrets of love—secrets learned by slipping under the canopy of a bedchamber, not brazenly, but after the manner of

Puck, without startling either Jeanie or Dougal, or anybody else. For this venture, one had need be chaste as our noble French language consents to be, and daring as Gérard's brush in his picture of "Daphnis and Chloe."

Mme. Jules's bedroom was a sacred place. No one but her husband and her maid was allowed to enter it. Wealth has great privileges, and the most enviable of them all is the power of carrying out thoughts and feelings to the uttermost; of quickening sensibility by fulfilling its myriad caprices; of encompassing that inner life with a splendor that exalts it, elegance that refines, and the subtle shades of expression that enhance the charm of love.

If you particularly detest picnic dinners and meals badly served; if you feel a certain pleasure at the sight of dazzling white damask, silver plate, exquisite porcelain, and richly carved and gilded tables lighted up by translucent tapers; if you have a taste for miracles of the most refined culinary art beneath silver covers with armorial bearings;—then, if you have a mind to be consistent, you must come down from the heights of your garret, and you must leave the grisettes in the street. Garrets and grisettes, like umbrellas and hinged clogs, must be left to people who take tickets at the doors of restaurants to pay for their dinners; and you must think of love as something rudimentary, only to be developed in all its charm by a gilded fireside, in a room made deaf to all sound from without by drawn blinds and closed shutters and thick curtain folds, while the opal light of a Parian lamp falls over soft carpets from the Savonnerie and the silken hangings on the walls. You must have mirrors to reflect each other, to give you an infinite series of pictures of the woman in whom you would fain find many women, of her to whom Love gives so many forms. There should be long, low sofas, and a couch like a secret which you guess before it is revealed; and soft furs spread for bare feet on the floor of the dainty chamber, and wax tapers under glass shades, and white gauze draperies, so that you can see to read at any hour of the night; and

flowers without too heavy-sweet a scent, and linen fine enough to satisfy Anne of Austria.

This delicious scheme had been carried out by Mme. Jules. But that is nothing; any woman of taste might do as much; though, nevertheless, there is a certain touch of personality in the arrangement of these things, a something which stamps this ornament or that detail with a character of its own. The fanatical cult of individuality is more prevalent than ever in these days. Rich people in France are beginning to grow more and more exclusive in their tastes and belongings than they have been for the past thirty years. Mme. Jules knew that her programme must be carried out consistently; that everything about her must be part of a harmonious whole of luxury which made a fit setting for love.

"Fifteen hundred francs and my Sophie," or "Love in a Cottage," is the sort of talk to expect from famished creatures, and brown bread does very well at first; but if the pair are really in love, their palates grow nicer, and in the end they sigh for the riches of the kitchen. Love holds toil and want in abhorrence, and would rather die at once than live a miserable life of hand to mouth.

Most women after a ball are impatient for sleep. Their rooms are strewn with limp flowers, scentless bouquets, and ball gowns. Their little thick shoes are left under an armchair, they totter across the floor in their high-heeled slippers, take the combs out of their hair, and shake down their tresses without a thought of their appearance. Little do they care if they disclose to their husbands' eyes the clasps and pins and cunning contrivances which maintained the dainty fabric in erection. All mystery is laid aside, all pretence dropped for the husband—there is no make-up for him. The corset, fearfully and wonderfully made, is left lying about if the sleepy waiting-woman forgets to put it away. Whalebone stiffening, sleeves incased in buckram, delusive finery, hair supplied by the coiffeur, the whole factitious woman, in fact, lies scattered about. *Disjecta*

membra poetæ, the artificial poetry so much admired by those for whose benefit the whole was conceived and elaborated, the remains of the pretty woman of an hour ago, incumber every corner, while the genuine woman in slatternly disorder, and the crumpled nightcap of yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, presents herself yawning to the arms of a husband who yawns likewise.

"For, after all, monsieur, if you want a pretty nightcap to crumple every night, you must increase my allowance."

Such is life as it is. A woman is always old and unattractive to her husband; always smart, dainty, and dressed in her best for that Other, every husband's rival, the world that slanders women or picks them to pieces.

Mme. Jules did quite otherwise. Love, like all other beings, has its own instinct of self-preservation. Inspired by love, constantly rewarded by happiness, she never failed in the scrupulous performance of little duties in which no one can grow slack, for by such means love is kept unimpaired by time. Are not these pains, these tasks imposed by a self-respect which becomes her passing well? What are they but sweet flatteries, a way of reverencing the beloved in one's own person?

So Mme. Jules had closed the door of her dressing-room on her husband; there she changed her ball gown and came out dressed for the night, mysteriously adorned for the mysterious festival of her heart. The chamber was always exquisite and dainty; Jules, when he entered it, found a woman coquettishly wrapped in a graceful loose gown, with her thick hair twisted simply about her head. She had nothing to fear from dishevelment; she robbed Love's sight and touch of nothing. This woman was always simpler and more beautiful for him than for the world—a woman revived by her toilet, a woman whose whole art consisted in being whiter than the cambrics that she wore, fresher than the freshest scent, more irresistible than the wiliest courtesan. In a word, she was always loving, and therefore always beloved. In this admirable skill in *le*

métier de femme—in the art and mystery of being a woman—lay the great secret of Josephine's charm for Napoleon, of Cesonia's influence over Caligula in older times, of the ascendency of Diane de Poitiers over Henri II. And if this secret is so potent in the hands of women who have counted seven or eight lustres, what a weapon is it for a young wife! The prescribed happiness of fidelity becomes rapture.

Mme. Jules had been particularly careful of her toilet for the night. After that conversation which froze the blood in her veins with terror, and still caused her the liveliest anxiety, she meant to be exquisitely charming, and she succeeded. She fastened her cambric dressing-gown, leaving it loose at the throat, and let her dark hair fall loosely over her shoulders. An intoxicating fragrance clung about her after the scented bath, her bare feet were thrust into velvet slippers. Jules in his dressing-gown was standing meditatively by the fire, with his elbow on the mantelpiece, and one foot on the fender. Feeling strong on her vantage ground, she tripped across to him and laid a hand over his eyes. Then she whispered, close to his ear, so closely that he could feel her warm breath on him and the tips of her teeth, "What are you thinking about, monsieur?"

With quick tact, she held him closely to her and put her arms about him to snatch him away from his gloomy thoughts. A woman who loves knows well how to use her power; and the better the woman, the more irresistible is her coquetry.

"Of you," said he.

"Only of me."

"Yes!"

"Oh! that was a very venturesome 'Yes!'"

They went to bed. As Mme. Jules fell asleep she thought, "Decidedly, M. de Maulincour will bring about some misfortune. Jules is preoccupied and absent-minded; he has thoughts which he does not tell me."

Toward three o'clock in the morning Mme. Jules was awakened by a foreboding that knocked at her heart while she slept. She felt, physically and mentally, that her husband was not beside her. She missed Jules's arm, on which her head had lain nightly for five years, while she slept happily and peacefully, an arm that never wearied of the weight. A voice cried, "Jules is in pain! Jules is weeping!" She lifted her head, sat upright, felt that her husband's place was cold, and saw him sitting by the fire, his feet on the fender, his head leaned back in the great armchair. There were tears on his cheeks. Poor Clémence was out of bed in a moment, and sprang to her husband's knee.

"Jules, what is it? Are you not feeling well? Speak, tell me; oh, speak to me, if you love me."

She poured out a hundred words of the deepest tenderness. Jules, at his wife's feet, kissed her knees, her hands. The tears flowed afresh as he answered:

"Clémence, dear, I am very wretched. It is not love if you cannot trust your mistress, and you are my mistress. I worship you, Clémence, even while I doubt you. . . . The things that man said last night went to my heart; and in spite of me, they stay there to trouble me. There is some mystery underneath this. Indeed, I blush to say it, but your explanation did not satisfy me. Common-sense sheds a light on it which love bids me reject. It is a dreadful struggle. How could I lie there with your head on my shoulder and think that there were thoughts in your mind that I did not know?—Oh, I believe you, I believe you," he exclaimed, as she smiled sadly and seemed about to speak. "Say not a word, reproach me with nothing. The least little word from you would break my heart. And besides, could you say a single thing that I have not said to myself for the last three hours? Yes, for three hours I lay, watching you as you slept, so beautiful you were, your forehead looked so quiet and pure.—Ah! yes, you have always told me all your thoughts, have you not? I am alone in your inmost heart. When I look into the depths of your eyes, I read all that lies

there. Your life is always as pure as those clear eyes. Ah! no, there is no secret beneath their transparent gaze."

He rose and kissed her eyelids.

"Let me confess it to you, beloved; all through these five years one thing has made me happier day by day, I have been glad that you should have none of the natural affections which always encroach a little upon love. You had neither sister nor father nor mother nor friend; I was neither above nor below any other in thy heart; I was there alone. Clémence, say over again for me all the intimate sweet words that you have spoken so often; do not scold me; comfort me, I am very wretched. I have a hateful suspicion to reproach myself with, while you have nothing burning in your heart. Tell me, my darling, may I stay by your side? How should two that are so truly one rest their heads on the same pillow, when one is at peace and the other in pain? . . . What can you be thinking of?" he cried abruptly, as Clémence looked meditative and confused, and could not keep back the tears.

"I am thinking of my mother," she said gravely. "You could not know, Jules, how it hurt your Clémence to recall her mother's last farewells, while your voice, the sweetest of all music, was sounding in her ears; to remember the solemn pressure of the chill hand of a dying woman, while I felt your caresses, and the overpowering sense of the sweetness of your love."

She made him rise, and held him tightly, with far more than man's strength, in her arms; she kissed his hair, her tears fell over him.

"Oh! I could be hewn into pieces for you! Tell me, beyond doubt, that I make you happy, that for you I am the fairest of women, that I am a thousand women for you. But you are loved as no other man can ever be loved. I do not know what the words 'duty,' 'virtue' mean. Jules, I love you for your own sake; it makes me happy to love you; I shall always love you; better and better, till my last sigh. I take a kind of pride in my love. I am sure that I am fated to know but the one great love in my life. Perhaps this

that I am going to say is wicked, but I am glad to have no children, I wish for none. I feel that I am more a wife than a mother.—Have you any fears? Listen to me, my love; promise me to forget, not this hour of mingled love and doubt, but that madman's words. I ask it, Jules. Promise me not to see him again, to keep away from his house. I have a feeling that if you go a single step further in that labyrinth, we shall both sink into depths where I shall die, with your name still on my lips, your heart in my heart. Why do you put me so high in your inmost life, and so low in the outer? You can take so many men's fortunes on trust, and you cannot give me the alms of one doubt? And when, for the first time in your life, you can prove that your faith in me is unbounded, would you dethrone me in your heart? Between a lunatic and your wife, you believe the lunatic's word? Oh! Jules—"

She broke off, flung back the hair that fell over her forehead and throat, and in heartrending tones she added, "I have said too much. A word should be enough. If there is still a shadow across your mind and your forehead, however faint it may be, mind, it will kill me."

She shivered in spite of herself, and her face grew white.

"Oh! I will kill that man," said Jules to himself, as he caught up his wife and carried her to the bed. "Let us sleep in peace, dear angel," he said aloud; "I have put it all out of my mind, I give you my word."

The loving words were repeated more lovingly, and Clémence slept. Jules, watching his sleeping wife, told himself—"She is right. When love is so pure, a suspicion is like a blight. Yes, and a blight on so innocent a soul, so delicate a flower, is certain death."

If between two human creatures, each full of love for the other, with a common life at every moment, there should arise a cloud, the cloud will vanish away, but not without leaving some trace of its passage behind. Perhaps their love grows deeper, as earth is fairer after the rain; or perhaps the shock reverberates like distant thunder in a blue sky; but,

at any rate, they cannot take up life where it was before, love must increase or diminish. At breakfast, M. and Mme. Jules showed each other an exaggerated attention. In their glances there was an almost forced gayety which might have been expected of people eager to be deceived. Jules had involuntary suspicions; his wife, a definite dread. And yet, feeling sure of each other, they had slept. Was the embarrassment due to want of trust? to the recollection of the scene in the night? They themselves could not tell. But they loved each other, and were loved so sincerely, that the bitter-sweet impression could not fail to leave its traces; and each, besides, was so anxious to be the first to efface them, to be the first to return, that they could not but remember the original cause of a first discord. For those who love, vexation is out of the question, and pain is still afar off, but the feeling is a kind of mourning difficult to describe. If there is a parallel between colors and the moods of the mind; if, as Locke's blind man said, scarlet produces the same effect on the eyes as the blast of a trumpet on the ears, then this melancholy reaction may be compared with sober gray tints. Yet saddened love, love conscious of its real happiness beneath the momentary trouble, knows a wholly new luxurious blending of pain and pleasure. Jules dwelt on the tones of his wife's voice, and watched for her glances with the young passion that stirred him in the early days of their love; and memories of five perfectly happy years, Clémence's beauty, her artless love, soon effaced (for the time) the last pangs of an intolerable ache.

It was Sunday. There was no Bourse and no business. Husband and wife could spend the whole day together, and each made more progress in the other's heart than ever before, as two children in a moment's terror cling closely and tightly together, instinctively united against danger. Where two have but one life, they know such hours of perfect happiness sent by chance, flowers of a day, which have nothing to do with yesterday or to-morrow.

To Jules and Clémence it was a day of exquisite enjoy-

ment. They might almost have felt a dim foreboding that this was to be the last day of their life as lovers. What name can be given to the mysterious impulse which hastens the traveller's steps before the storm has given warning?—it fills the dying with a glow of life and beauty a few days before the end, and sets them making the most joyous plans; it counsels the learned man to raise the flame of the midnight lamp when it burns most brightly; it wakens a mother's fears when some keen-sighted observer looks too intently at her child. We all feel this influence in great crises in our lives, yet we have neither studied it nor found a name for it. It is something more than a presentiment, something less than vision.

All went well till the next day. It was Monday, Jules Desmarets was obliged to be at the Bourse at the usual time; and, according to his custom, he asked his wife before he went if she would take the opportunity of driving with him.

"No," she said; "the weather is too bad."

And, indeed, it was pouring with rain. It was about half-past two o'clock. M. Desmarets went on the market, and thence to the Treasury. At four o'clock, when he came out, he confronted M. de Maulincour, who was waiting for him with the pertinacity bred of hate and revenge.

"I have some important information to give you, sir," he said, taking Desmarets by the arm. "Listen to me. I am an honorable man; I do not wish to send anonymous letters which would trouble your peace of mind; I prefer to speak directly. In short, you may believe that if my life were not at stake, I should never interfere between husband and wife, even if I believed that I had a right to do so."

"If you are going to say anything that concerns Mme. Desmarets," answered Jules, "I beg you to be silent, sir."

"If I keep silence, sir, you may see Mme. Jules in the dock beside a convict before very long. Now, am I to be silent?"

Jules's handsome face grew white, but seemingly he was calm again in a moment. He drew Maulincour under one

of the porches of the temporary building then frequented by stockbrokers, and spoke, his voice unsteady with deep emotion: "I am listening, sir, but there will be a duel to the death between us if—"

"Oh! I am quite willing," exclaimed M. de Maulincour. "I have the greatest respect for you. Do you speak of death, sir? You are not aware, I expect, that your wife probably employed somebody to poison me on Saturday evening? Yes, sir, since the day before yesterday some extraordinary change has taken place in me. All the hairs of my head distil a fever and mortal languor that pierces through the bone; and I know perfectly well what man it was that touched my head at the dance."

M. de Maulincour told the whole story of his Platonic love for Mme. Jules and the details of the adventure with which this "Scene" opens. Anybody would have listened to him as attentively as Desmarets, but Mme. Jules's husband might be expected to be more astonished than anybody else in the world. And here his character showed itself—he was more surprised than overwhelmed. Thus constituted a judge, and the judge of an adored wife, in his inmost mind he assumed a judicial directness and inflexibility of mind. He was a lover still; he thought less of his own broken life than of the woman; he heard, not his own grief, but a far-off voice crying to him, "Clémence could not lie! Why should she be false to you?"

"I felt certain that in M. de Funcal I recognized this Ferragus, whom the police believe to be dead," concluded M. de Maulincour, "so I put an intelligent man on his track at once. As I went home, I fortunately chanced to call to mind a Mme. Meynardie, mentioned in this Ida's letter, Ida being apparently my persecutor's mistress. With this one bit of information, my emissary speedily cleared up this ghastly adventure, for he is more skilled at finding out the truth than the police themselves."

"I am unable to thank you, sir, for your confidence," said Desmarets. "You speak of proof and witnesses; I am wait-

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ing for them. I shall not flinch from tracking down the truth in this extraordinary business; but you will permit me to suspend my judgment until the case is proved by circumstantial evidence. In any case, you shall have satisfaction, for you must understand that we both require it."

Jules went home.

"What is it?" asked his wife. "You look dreadfully pale."

"It is a cold day," he said, as he walked slowly away to the bedroom, where everything spoke of happiness and love, the so quiet chamber where a deadly storm was brewing.

"Have you been out to-day?" he asked, with seeming carelessness. The question, no doubt, was prompted by the last of a thousand thoughts, which had gathered unconsciously in his mind, till they took the shape of a single lucid reflection, which jealousy brought out on the spur of the moment.

"No," she answered, and her voice sounded frank.

Even as she spoke, Jules, glancing through the dressing-room door, noticed drops of rain on the bonnet which his wife used to wear in the morning. Jules was a violent-tempered man, but he was likewise extremely sensitive; he shrank from confronting his wife with a lie. And yet those drops of water shed, as it were, a gleam of light which tortured his brain. He went downstairs to the porter's room.

"Fouquereau," he said, when he had made sure that they were alone, "three hundred francs per annum to you if you tell me the truth; if you deceive me, out you go; and if you mention my question and your answer to any one else, you will get nothing at all."

He stopped, looked steadily at the man, and then drawing him to the light of the window, he asked: "Did your mistress go out this morning?"

"Madame went out at a quarter to three, and I think I saw her come in again half an hour ago."

"Is that true, upon your honor?"

"Yes, sir."

"You shall have the annual sum I promised you. But if you mention it, remember what I said; for if you do, you lose it all."

Jules went back to his wife.

"Clémence," he said, "I want to put my house accounts a bit straight, so do not be vexed if I ask you something. I have let you have forty thousand francs this year, have I not?"

"More than that," she answered. "Forty-seven."

"Could you tell me exactly how it was spent?"

"Why, yes. First of all, there were several outstanding bills from last year—"

"I shall find out nothing in this way," thought Jules. "I have gone the wrong way to work."

Just at that moment the man brought in a note. Jules opened it for the sake of appearances, but seeing the signature at the foot, he read it eagerly:

"MONSIEUR—To set your mind and our minds at rest, I take the step of writing to you, although I have not the privilege of being known to you; but my position, my age, and the fear that some misfortune may befall, compels me to beseech your forbearance in the distressing situation in which our afflicted family is placed. For some days past, M. Auguste de Maulincour has shown unmistakable symptoms of mental derangement; and we are afraid that he may disturb your happiness with the wild fancies of which he spoke to M. le Commandeur de Pamiers and to me, in the first fit of fever. We desire to give you warning of a malady which is still curable, no doubt; and as it might have very serious consequences for the honor of the family and my grandson's future, I count upon your discretion. If M. le Commandeur or I, monsieur, had been able to make the journey to your house, we should have dispensed with a written communication; but you will comply, I do not

doubt, with the request of a mother who beseeches you to burn this letter.

"Permit me to add that I am, with the highest regard,

"BARONNE DE MAULINCOURT *née* DE RIEUX."

"What tortures!" exclaimed Jules.

"What can be passing in your thoughts?" asked his wife, with intense anxiety in her face.

"I have come to this!" cried Jules; "I ask myself whether you have had this note sent to me to dispel my suspicions. So judge what I am suffering," he added, tossing the letter to her.

"The unhappy man," said Mme. Jules, letting the sheet fall; "I am sorry for him, though he has given me a great deal of pain."

"You know that he spoke to me?"

"Oh! Did you go to see him when you had given your word?" was her terror-stricken answer.

"Clémence, our love is in danger; we are outside all the ordinary laws of life, so let us leave minor considerations in great perils. Now, tell me, why did you go out this morning? Women think they are privileged to tell us fibs now and again. You often amuse yourselves with preparing pleasant surprises for us, do you not? Just now you said one thing and meant another no doubt; you said a 'No' for a 'Yes.'"

He brought her bonnet out of the dressing-room.

"Look here! Without meaning to play the Bartholo here, your bonnet has betrayed you. Are these not raindrops? Then you must have gone out and caught the drops of rain as you looked about for a cab, or in coming in or out of the house to which you drove. Still, a woman can go out even if she has told her husband that she means to stay indoors; there is no harm in that. There are so many reasons for changing one's mind. A whim, a woman has a right to be whimsical, is that not so? You are not bound to be consistent with yourselves. Perhaps you forgot something;

something to be done for somebody else, or a call, or a charitable errand? But there can be nothing to prevent a wife from telling her husband what she has done. How should one ever blush on a friend's breast? And it is not a jealous husband who speaks, my Clémence; it is the friend, the lover, the comrade."

He flung himself passionately at her feet.

"Speak, not to justify yourself, but to soothe an intolerable pain. I know for certain that you left the house. Well, what did you do? Where did you go?"

"Yes, Jules, I left the house," she said, and though her voice shook, her face was composed. "But do not ask me anything more. Wait and trust me, or you may lay up lifelong regrets for yourself. Jules, my Jules, trust is love's great virtue. I confess it, I am too much troubled to answer you at this moment; I am a woman unapt at lying, and I love you, you know I love you."

"With all that shakes a man's belief and rouses his jealousy—for I am not the first in your heart, Clémence, it seems; I am not your very self?—well, with it all, I would still rather trust you, Clémence, trust your voice and those eyes of yours. If you are deceiving me, you would deserve—"

"Oh! a thousand deaths," she broke in.

"And I have not one thought hidden from you, while—"

"Hush," she cried, "our happiness depends upon silence between us."

"Ah! I will know all!" he shouted, with a burst of violent anger.

As he spoke a sound reached them, a shrill-tongued woman's voice raised to a scream in the antechamber.

"I will come in, I tell you! Yes, I will come in, I want to see her, I will see her!" somebody cried.

Jules and Clémence hurried into the drawing-room, and in another moment the door was flung open. A young woman suddenly appeared with two servants behind her.

"This woman would come in, sir, in spite of us. We told her once before that madame was not at home. She

said she knew quite well that madame had gone out, but she had just seen her come in. She threatens to stop at the house door until she has spoken to madame."

"You can go," said M. Desmarets, addressing the servants.

"What do you want, mademoiselle?" he added, turning to the visitor.

The "young lady" was a feminine type known only in Paris; a type as much a product of the city as the mud or the curbstones in the streets, or the Seine water which is filtered through half a score of great reservoirs before it sparkles clear and pure in cut-glass decanters, all its muddy sediment left behind. She is, moreover, a truly characteristic product. Pencil and pen and charcoal, painter and caricaturist and draughtsman, have caught her likeness repeatedly; yet she eludes analysis, because you can no more grasp her in all her moods than you can grasp Nature, or the fantastic city herself. Her circle has but one point of contact with vice, from which the rest of its circumference is far removed. Yet the one flaw in her character is the only trait that reveals her; all her fine qualities lie out of sight while she flaunts her ingenuous shamelessness. The plays and books that bring her before the public, with all the illusion that clings about her, give but a very inadequate idea of her; she never is, and never will be, herself except in her garret; elsewhere she is either worse or better than she really is. Give her wealth, she degenerates; in poverty she is misconstrued. How should it be otherwise? She has so many faults and so many virtues; she lives too close to a tragic end in the river on the one hand, and a branding laugh upon the other; she is too fair and too foul; too much like a personification of that Paris which she provides with toothless old portresses, washerwomen, street-sweepers, and beggars; sometimes too with insolent comtesses and admired and applauded actress and opera singer. Twice in former times she even gave two queens, in all but name, to the Monarchy. Who could seize such a Protean woman-shape?

She is a very woman, less than a woman, and more than a woman. The painter of contemporary life can only give a few details, the general effect of so vast a subject, and some idea of its boundlessness.

This was a Paris grisette—a grisette, however, in her glory. She was the grisette that drives about in a cab; a happy, handsome, and fresh young person, but still a grisette, a grisette with claws and scissors; bold as a Spaniard, quarrelsome as an English prude instituting a suit for restitution of conjugal rights, coquettish as a great lady, and more outspoken; equal to all occasions, a typical "lioness," issuing from her little apartment.

Many and many a time she had dreamed of that establishment with its red cotton curtains and its furniture covered with Utrecht velvet, of the tea-table and the hand-painted china tea-service and the settee; the small square of velvet-pile carpet, the alabaster timepiece and vases under glass shades, the yellow bedroom, the soft eiderdown quilt—of all the joys of a grisette's life, in short. Now she had a servant, a superannuated member of her own profession, a veteran grisette with mustaches and good-conduct stripes. Now she went to the theatres and had as many sweetmeats as she liked; she had silk dresses and finery to soil and draggle, and all the joys of life from the point of view of the milliner's assistant, except a carriage of her own, a carriage being to the milliner's assistant's dreams what the marshal's baton is for the private soldier. Yes, all these things this particular grisette possessed in return for a real affection, or perhaps in spite of a real affection on her part; for others of her class will often exact as much for one hour in the day, a sort of toll carelessly paid for by a brief space in some old man's clutches.

The young person now confronting M. and Mme. Jules wore shoes which displayed so much white stocking that they looked like an almost invisible black boundary line against the carpet. The kind of footgear, very neatly rendered by French comic drawings, is one of the Parisian

grisette's peculiar charms of dress; but a still more unmistakable sign for observant eyes is the precision with which her gown is molded to her figure, which is very clearly outlined. Moreover, the visitor was "turned out" in a green dress, to use the picturesque expression coined by the French soldier, a dress with a chemisette, which revealed a fine figure, fully displayed, for her Ternaux shawl would have slipped down to the floor if she had not held the two loosely-knotted ends in her grasp. She had a delicate face, a white skin, and color in her cheeks, sparkling gray eyes, a very prominent rounded forehead, and carefully waved hair, which escaped from under a little bonnet, and fell in large curls about her neck.

"My name is Ida, sir. And if that is Mme. Jules whom I have the privilege of addressing, I have come to tell her all that I have against her on my mind. It is a shame, when she has made her bargain, and has such furniture as you have here, to try to take away the man to whom a poor girl is as good as married, and him talking of making it all right by marrying me at the registry office. There's quite plenty nice young men in the world—isn't there, sir?—for her to fancy without her coming and taking a man well on in years away from me when I am happy with him. *Quien*, I haven't a fine house, I haven't, I have my love! I detest your fine-looking men and money; I am all heart and—"

Mme. Jules turned to her husband: "You will permit me, sir, to hear no more of this," said she, and went back to her room.

"If the lady is living with you, I have made a hash of it, as far as I can see; but so much the worser," continued Ida. "What business has she to come and see M. Ferragus every day?"

"You are mistaken, mademoiselle," said Jules, in dull amazement; "my wife could not possibly—"

"Oh! so you are married, are you, the two of you?" said the grisette, evidently rather surprised. "Then it's far worse, sir, is it not, when a woman has a lawful hus-

band of her own to have anything to do with a man like Henri—"

"But what Henri?" said Jules, taking Ida aside into another room lest his wife should overhear anything further.

"Well, then, M. Ferragus."

"But he is dead," protested Jules.

"What stuff! I went to Franconi's yesterday evening, and he brought me home again, as he ought to do. Your lady too can give you news of him. Didn't she go to see him at three o'clock? That she did, I know, for I was waiting for her in the street; being as a very nice man, M. Justin — perhaps you know him? a little old fogy that wears stays and has seals on his watch-chain—it was he that told me that I had a Mme. Jules for my rival. That name, sir, is well known among fancy names; asking your pardon, since it's your own, but Mme. Jules might be a duchess at court, Henri is so rich he can afford all his whims. It is my business to look after my own, as I have a right to do; for I love Henri, I do. He was my first fancy, and my love and the rest of my life is at stake. I am afraid of nothing, sir; I am honest, and I never told a lie yet, nor took a thing belonging to anybody whatever. If I had an empress for my rival I should go right straight to her, and if she took my husband that is to be from me, I feel that I could kill her, was she never so much an empress, for one fine woman is as good as another, sir—"

"That will do, that will do!" interrupted Jules. "Where do you live?"

"Number 14 Rue de la Corderie du Temple, sir. Ida Gruget, corset-maker at your service, sir; for we make a good many corsets for gentlemen."

"And this man Ferragus, as you call him, where does he live?"

"Why, sir" (tightening her lips), "in the first place, he is not just 'a man'—he is a gentleman, and better off than you are, maybe. But what makes you ask me for his address, when your wife knows where he lives? He told me

I was not to give it to anybody. Am I bound to give you an answer? I am not in the police court nor the confessional, the Lord be thanked, and I am not beholden to any one."

"And how if I offer you twenty, thirty, forty thousand francs to tell me his address?"

"Oh, not quite, my little dear; it's no go," said she, with a gesture learned in the streets, as accompaniment to her singular answer. "No amount of money would get that out of me. I have the honor to wish you good evening.—Which way do you get out of this?"

Jules allowed her to go. He was stricken to earth. The whole world seemed to be crumbling away under him, the sky above had fallen with a crash.

"Dinner is ready, sir," said the footman.

For fifteen minutes the footman and Desmarets' man-servant waited in the dining-room, but no one appeared. The maid came in to say that "the mistress would not take dinner."

"Why, what is the matter, Joséphine?" asked the footman.

"I don't know. The mistress is crying, and she is going to bed. The master has a fancy somewhere else, I expect, and it has been found out at an awkward time; do you understand? I would not answer for the mistress's life. Men are all so clumsy, always making scenes without thinking in the least."

"Not a bit of it," said the man, lowering his voice; "on the contrary, it is the mistress who—in short, you understand. What time could the master have for gadding about, when he hasn't spent a night out these five years, and goes down to his office at ten o'clock, and only comes up to lunch at twelve? In fact, his life is open and regular, while the mistress goes off pretty nearly every day at three o'clock, no one knows where."

"So does the master," said the maid, taking her mistress's part.

"But he goes to the Bourse, the master does.—This is the third time I have told him that dinner is ready," he added, after a pause; "you might as well talk to a statute."

Jules came in.

"Where is your mistress?" asked he.

"Madame has gone to bed, she has a sick headache," said the maid, assuming an important air.

"You can take the dinner away," said Jules, with much cool self-possession. "I shall keep madame company." And he went to his wife. She was crying, and stifling her sobs with her handkerchief.

"Why do you cry?" said Jules, using the formal *vous*. "You have no violence, no reproaches to expect from me. Why should I avenge myself? If you have not been faithful to my love, it is because you were not worthy of it—"

"Not worthy!"

The words repeated amid her sobs, and the tone in which they were spoken, would have softened any man but Jules.

"To kill you, a man must love more, perhaps, than I," he resumed; "but I have not the heart to do it, I would sooner make away with myself and leave you to your—your happiness—and to—whom—?"

He broke off.

"Make away with yourself!" cried Clémence. She flung herself at Jules's feet and clung about them; but he tried to shake her off, and dragged her to the bed.

"Leave me alone," said he.

"No, no, Jules! If you love me no longer, I shall die. Do you wish to know all?"

"Yes." He took her, held her forcibly in his grasp, sat down on the bedside, and held her between his knees; then he gazed dry-eyed at the fair face, now red as fire, and seamed with tear-stains. "Now, tell me," he said for the second time.

Clémence began to sob afresh.

"I cannot. It is a secret of life and death. If I told you, I . . . No, I *cannot*. Have pity, Jules!"

"You are deceiving me still," he said, but he replaced the formal *vous* by *tu*.

"Ah!" she cried, at this sign of relenting. "Yes, Jules, you may believe that I am deceiving you, now you shall know everything very soon."

"But this Ferragus, this convict that you go to see, this man enriched by crime, if he is not your lover, if you are not his—"

"Oh, Jules!"

"Well, is he your unknown benefactor, the man to whom we owe our success, as people have said before this?"

"Who said so?"

"A man whom I killed in a duel."

"Oh, God! one man dead already."

"If he is not your protector, if he does not give you money, and you take money to him, is he your brother?"

"Well," she said, "and if he were?"

M. Desmarets folded his arms.

"Why should this have been kept from my knowledge?" returned he. "Did you both deceive me—you and your mother? And do people go to see their brothers every day, or nearly every day, eh?"

But his wife fell swooning at his feet.

He pulled the bell ropes, summoned Joséphine, and laid Clémence on the bed.

"She is dead," he thought, "and how if I am wrong?"

"This will kill me," murmured Mme. Jules, as she came to herself.

"Joséphine," exclaimed M. Desmarets, "go for M. Desplein; and then go to my brother's house and ask him to come as soon as possible."

"Why your brother?" asked Clémence. But Jules had already left the room. For the first time in five years Mme. Jules slept alone in her bed, and was obliged to allow a doctor to enter the sanctuary, two troubles that she felt keenly.

Desplein found Mme. Jules very ill; never had violent emotion been worse timed. He postponed his decision on

the case till the morrow, and left diverse prescriptions which were not carried out; all physical suffering was forgotten in heart distress. Daylight was at hand, and still Clémence lay awake. Her thoughts were busy with the murmur of conversation, which lasted for several hours, between the brothers, but no single word reached her through the thickness of the walls to give a clew to the meaning of the prolonged conference. M. Desmarets, the notary, went at length; and then, in the stillness of the night, with that strange stimulation of the senses that comes with passion, Clémence could hear the squeaking of a pen and the unconscious movements made by some one busily writing. Those who are accustomed to sit up through the night, and have noticed the effect of deep silence on the laws of acoustics, know that a faint sound at intervals is easily heard, when a continuous and even murmur is scarcely distinguishable.

Clémence rose, anxious and trembling. She forgot her condition, forgot that she was damp with perspiration, and, barefooted and without a dressing-gown, went across and opened the door. Luckily it turned noiselessly on its hinges. She saw her husband, pen in hand, sitting fast asleep in his easy-chair. The candles were burning low in the sockets. She crept forward, and on an envelope that lay sealed already, she saw the words, "My Will."

She knelt down, as if at a grave side, and kissed her husband's hand. He woke at once.

"Jules, dear, even criminals condemned to death are given a few days' respite," she said, looking at him with eyes shining with love and fever. "Your innocent wife asks for two days—only two days. Leave me free for two days, and—wait. After that I shall die happy; at any rate, you will be sorry."

"You shall have the delay, Clémence."

And while she kissed her husband's hands in a pathetic outpouring of her heart, Jules, fascinated by that cry of innocence, took her in his arms and kissed her on the fore-

head, utterly ashamed that he should still submit to the power of that noble beauty.

Next morning, after a few hours of sleep, Jules went to his wife's room, mechanically obedient to his custom of never leaving home without first seeing her. Clémence was asleep. A ray of light from a chink in the highest window fell on the face of a woman worn out with grief. Sorrow had left traces on her brow already, and faded the fresh red of her lips. A lover's eyes could not mistake the significance of the dark marbled streaks and the pallor of illness, which took the place of the even color in her cheeks and the white velvet of her skin, the transparent surface over which all the feelings that stirred that fair soul so unconsciously flitted.

"She is not well," thought Jules. "Poor Clémence, may God protect us!"

He kissed her very gently on the forehead; she awoke, looked into her husband's face, and understood. She could not speak, but she took his hand, and her eyes grew soft with tears.

"I am innocent," she said, finishing her dream.

"You will not go out to-day, will you?" said Jules.

"No; I feel too weak to get up."

"If you change your mind, wait till I come home," said Jules, and he went down to the porter's lodge.

"Fouquereau, you must keep a strict watch to-day," he said. "I wish to know every one who comes in or out."

With that, Jules sprang into a cab, bade the man drive to the Hotel de Maulincour, and asked for the Baron.

"Monsieur is ill," was the reply.

Jules insisted, and sent in his name. If he could not see M. de Maulincour, he would see the Vidame or the dowager. He waited for some time in the old Baroness's drawing-room; she came at last, however, to say that her grandson was far too ill to see him.

"I know the nature of his illness, madame," said Jules,

"from the letter which you did me the honor to send, and I entreat you to believe—"

"A letter, monsieur? A letter that I sent to you?" broke in the Baroness. "I have not written a word. And what am I supposed to say, monsieur, in this letter?"

"Madame, as I meant to call on M. de Maulincour this very day, and to return the note to you, I thought I need not destroy it in spite of the request at the end. Here it is."

The dowager rang for her double-strength spectacles, and glanced down the sheet with every sign of the greatest astonishment.

"The handwriting is so exactly like mine, monsieur, that if we were not speaking of a quite recent event, I should be deceived by it myself. My grandson certainly is ill, monsieur, but his mind has not been affected the least bit in the world. We are puppets in the hands of wicked people; still, I cannot guess the object of this piece of impertinence. . . . You shall see my grandson, monsieur, and you will admit that he is perfectly sane."

She rang the bell again to ask if it were possible for the Baron to receive a visit from M. Desmarets. The footman brought an answer in the affirmative. Jules went up to Auguste de Maulincour's room, and found that young officer seated in an armchair by the fireside. He was too weak to rise, and greeted his visitor with a melancholy inclination of the head. The Vidame de Pamiers was keeping him company.

"M. le Baron," began Jules, "I have something to say of so private a nature that I should wish to speak with you alone."

"Monsieur," said Auguste, "M. le Commandeur knows all about this affair; you need not fear to speak before him."

"M. le Baron, you have disturbed and almost destroyed my happiness; and you had no right to do so. Until we know which of us must ask, or give satisfaction to the other,

you are bound to give me your assistance in the dark ways to which you have suddenly brought me. So I have come to inquire the present address of this mysterious being who exercises such an unlucky influence on our lives, and seems to have some supernatural power at his orders. I received this letter yesterday, just as I came in after hearing your account of yourself."

Jules handed the forged letter.

"This Ferragus or Bourignard or M. de Funcal is a fiend incarnate!" shouted Maulincour. "In what hideous labyrinth have I set foot? Whither am I going?—I was wrong, monsieur," he added, looking full at Jules, "but death surely is the greatest expiation of all, and I am dying. So you can ask me anything you wish; I am at your service."

"You should know where this strange man lives; I absolutely must get to the bottom of this mystery, if it costs me all that I have; and with such a cruelly ingenious enemy, every moment is precious."

"Justin will tell us all about it directly," replied the Baron. The Vidame fidgeted upon his chair. Auguste rang the bell.

"Justin is not in the house," exclaimed the Vidame in a hasty fashion, which said a good deal more than the words.

"Well," Auguste said quickly, "and if he is not, our servants here know where he is. A man on horseback shall go at once to find him. Your servant is in Paris, is he not? They will find him somewhere."

The old Vidame de Pamiers was visibly troubled.

"Justin will not come, dear fellow," he said. "I wanted to keep the accident from your knowledge, but—"

"Is he dead?" exclaimed M. de Maulincour. "And when? and how?"

"It happened yesterday night. He went out to supper with some old friends, and got drunk no doubt; his friends, being also the worse for wine, must have left him to lie in the street; a heavy carriage drove right over him—"

"The convict did not fail that time; he killed his man

at the first attempt," said Auguste. "He was not so lucky with me; he had to try four times."

Jules grew moody and thoughtful.

"So I shall find out nothing, it seems," he exclaimed, after a long pause. "Perhaps your man was rightly served; he went beyond your orders when he slandered Mme. Desmarets to one 'Ida,' to stir up the girl's jealousy and let her loose upon us."

"Ah, monsieur, in my fury I gave over Mme. Jules to him."

"Sir!" exclaimed Mme. Jules's husband, stung to the quick; but Maulincour silenced him with a wave of the hand.

"Oh! now I am prepared for all that may happen. What is done is done, and you will do no better; nor can you say anything that my own conscience has not told me already. I am expecting the most famous specialist in toxicology to know my fate. If the pain is likely to be intolerable, I have made up my mind; I shall blow my brains out."

"You are talking like a boy," cried the old Vidame, aghast at the Baron's coolness. "Your grandmother would die of grief!"

"And so, monsieur, there is no way of finding out in what part of Paris this extraordinary man lives?" asked Jules.

"I think, monsieur, that I heard this poor Justin say that M. de Funcal was to be found at the Portuguese or else the Brazilian Embassy," said the Vidame. "M. de Funcal is of a good family; he belongs to both countries. As for the convict, he is dead and buried. Your persecutor, whoever he may be, is so powerful, it seems to me, that you had better accept him in his new metamorphosis until you are in a position to overwhelm him with confusion and crush him; but set about it prudently, my dear sir. If M. de Maulincour had taken my advice, nothing of all this would have happened."

Jules withdrew, coolly but politely. He was at his wits' end to find Ferragus. As he came in, the porter came out

to inform him that Madame had gone out to put a letter into the box opposite the Rue de Ménars. Jules felt humiliated by the profound intelligence with which the man aided and abetted his scheme, and by the very skill with which he found means to serve him. The zeal and peculiar ingenuity which inferiors will show to compromise their betters, when their betters compromise themselves, were well known to Jules, and he appreciated the danger of having such accomplices in any affair whatsoever; but he had forgotten his personal dignity till he suddenly saw how far he had fallen. What a triumph for a serf, unable to rise to his master, to bring that master down to his own level!

Jules was stern and abrupt with the man. Another blunder. But he was so wretched! His life, till then so straight and clean, had grown crooked; and now there was nothing for it but to use craft and lies. And Clémence, too, was using lies and craft with him. It was a sickening moment. Lost in depths of bitter thought, he stood forgetful of himself and motionless on the door step. Sometimes he gave way to despair which counselled flight; he would leave France and carry with him his love and all the illusions of unproved guilt; and then again, never doubting but that Clémence's letter was addressed to Ferragus, he cast about for ways of intercepting the reply sent by that mysterious being. Again, examining into his singular success since his marriage, he asked himself whether that slander which he had avenged was not after all a truth. At length, returning to Ferragus's answer, he reasoned with himself on this wise:

"But will this Ferragus, so profoundly astute as he is, so consequent in the least things that he does; this man who sees, and foresees, and calculates, and even guesses our thoughts, will he send an answer? Is he not sure to employ some means in keeping with his power? Can he not send a reply by some ingenious scoundrel, or, more likely still, in a jewel case brought by some unsuspecting, honest creature, or in a parcel with a pair of shoes which some working-girl, in all innocence, brings home for my wife? Suppose that

there should be an understanding between him and Clémence?"

He could trust nothing and nobody. He made a hurried survey of the boundless field, the shoreless sea of conjecture; and after drifting hither and thither, and in every possible direction, it occurred to him that he was stronger in his own house than anywhere else; so he resolved to stay at home and watch like an ant-lion at the bottom of its funnel in the sand.

"Fouquereau," he said, "if any one asks for me, I am not at home. But if any one wishes to speak with madame, or brings anything for her, ring twice. And you must let me see every letter left here, no matter to whom it is addressed.—And so," he thought within himself, as he went into his office on the entresol, "and so I shall outwit Master Ferragus. And if his messenger is cunning enough to ask for me, so as to find out whether madame is alone, at any rate I shall not be gulled like a fool."

His office windows looked into the street. As he stood with his face pressed against the panes, jealousy inspired him with a final stratagem. He determined to send his head-clerk to the Bourse in his carriage; the clerk should take a letter to a friend of his, another stockbroker, to whom he would explain his business transactions—he would beg his friend to take his place. His most difficult business he put off till the morrow, regardless of the rise and fall of stocks, and all the funds of Europe. Fair prerogative of love! Love eclipses all things else. The rest of the world fades away before it; and altar, throne, and government securities are as though they were not. At half-past three o'clock, just when the Bourse is all agog with rates and premiums, rises and falls, current accounts, and the rest of it, Jules looked up and saw Fouquereau with a beaming countenance.

"An old woman has just been here, sir; she is as sharp as they make them. Oh! she is an artful one, I can tell you. She asked for you, and seemed put out to find you were not at home; then she gave me this letter here for madame."

Jules broke the seal with fevered anguish, but he dropped exhausted into his chair. The letter was a string of meaningless words, and quite unintelligible without a key. It was written in cipher.

"You can go, Fouquereau."

The man went.

"This mystery is deeper than the unplumbed sea. Oh, this is love beyond a doubt. Love, and love only, could be as sagacious, as ingenious as the writer of this letter. Oh, God! I will kill Clémence."

Even at that moment a bright idea burst upon his brain, and struck him so forcibly that it seemed almost like the breaking out of light. In the old days of poverty and hard work before his marriage, Jules had made a real friend. The excessive delicacy with which Jules spared the susceptibilities of a poor and shy comrade, the respect that he paid his friend, the tactful ingenuity with which he made that friend accept a share of his good fortune without a blush—all these things had increased their friendship since those days. In spite of Desmarets' prosperity, Jacquet was faithful to him.

Jacquet, an honest man, and a toiler of austere life, had slowly made his way in that Department which of all others employs most rascality and most honesty. He was in the Foreign Office; the most delicate part of its archives was in his charge. He was a kind of departmental glow-worm, shedding light during his working hours on secret correspondence, deciphering and classifying despatches. Rather above the rank and file of the middle classes, he held the highest (subaltern) posts at the Foreign Office, and lived unrecognized; rejoicing in an obscurity which put him beyond reverses of fortune, and content to pay his debt to his fatherland in small coin. A born assistant-registrar, he enjoyed the respect that was due to him, in newspaper language. And, as an unknown patriot in a Government Department, he resigned himself to groan, by his fireside, over the aberrations of the Government that he served. His position, thanks to Jules, had been improved by a suitable marriage.

In his own home, Jacquet was a debonair king, a "man with an umbrella"; his wife had a jobbed carriage which he never used himself; and as a final touch to this portrait of an unconscious philosopher, it should be added that he had never yet suspected, and never would suspect, how much he might make out of his position, with a stockbroker for his intimate friend, and a knowledge of State secrets. A hero after the manner of that unknown private soldier who died to save Napoleon with a cry of "Who goes there?" he was faithful to his Department.

In another ten minutes Jules stood in Jacquet's private office. His friend brought forward a chair, laid his green silk eye-shade down methodically upon the table, rubbed his hands, took out his snuff-box, rose to his feet, threw out his chest with a crack of the shoulder-blades, and said: "What chance brings you here, *Mosieur* Desmarets? What do you want with me?"

"I want you to find out a secret for me, Jacquet; it is a matter of life and death."

"It is not about politics?"

"You are not the man I should come to if I wanted to know anything of that kind," said Jules. "No, it is a private affair, and I must ask you to keep it as secret as possible."

"Claude Joseph Jacquet, professional mute. Why, don't you know me?" laughed he. "My line of business is discretion."

Jules put the letter before him.

"This is addressed to my wife; I must have it read to me," he said.

"The devil! the devil! a bad business," said Jacquet, scrutinizing the document as a money-lender examines a negotiable bill. "Aha! a stencil cipher. Wait."

He left Jules alone in the office, but came back pretty soon.

"Tomfoolery, my friend. It is written with an old stencil cipher which the Portuguese ambassador used in M. de

Choiseul's time after the expulsion of the Jesuits. Stay, look here."

Jacquet took up a sheet of paper with holes cut in it at regular intervals; it looked rather like the lace paper which confectioners put over their sugar-plums. When this was set over the sheet below, Jules could easily make sense of the words left uncovered.

"My dear Clémence—Do not trouble yourself any more, no one shall trouble our happiness again, and your husband will put his suspicions aside. I cannot go to see you. However ill you may be, you must gather up your courage to come to me; summon up your strength, love will give it you. I have been through a most cruel operation for your sake, and I cannot stir out of bed. Moxas were applied yesterday evening to the nape of the neck and across the shoulders; it was necessary to cauterize pretty deeply. Do you understand? But I thought of you, and found the pain not intolerable. I have left the sheltering roof of the Embassy to baffle Maulincour, who shall not persecute us much longer; and here I am safe from all search at Number 12 Rue des Enfants-Rouges, with an old woman, one Mme. Etienne Gruget, mother of that Ida who shall shortly pay dear for her silly prank. Come to-morrow at nine o'clock. My room can only be reached by an inner staircase. Ask for M. Camuset. Good-by till to-morrow. A kiss on thy forehead, my darling."

Jacquet gazed at Jules with a kind of shocked expression with a very real sympathy in it, and brought out his favorite invocation, "The devil! the devil!" in two distinct intonations.

"It seems clear to you, doesn't it?" said Jules. "Well, and yet, in the bottom of my heart a voice pleads for my wife, and that voice rises above all the pangs of jealousy. I shall endure the most horrid torture until to-morrow; but at last, to-morrow between nine and ten, I shall know all.

I shall either be wretched or happy for life. Think of me, Jacquet."

"I will be at your house at eight o'clock. We will go yonder together. I will wait outside in the street for you, if you like. There may be risks to run; you ought to have some one you can trust within call, a sure hand that can take a hint. Count upon me."

"Even to help me to kill a man?"

"The devil! the devil!" Jacquet said quickly, repeating, so to speak, the same musical note. "I have two children and a wife—"

Jules squeezed Claude Jacquet's hand and went out. But he came back in haste.

"I am forgetting the letter," said he. "And that is not all; it must be sealed again."

"The devil! the devil! you opened it without taking an impression; but, luckily, the edge of the fracture is pretty clean. There, let me have it, I will give it you back again *secundum scripturam*."

"When?"

"By half-past five—"

"If I am not in, simply give it to the porter, and tell him to send it up to madame."

"Do you want me to-morrow?"

"No. Good-by."

Jules soon reached the Place de la Rotonde du Temple, dismissed his cabriolet, and walked down to the Rue des Enfants-Rouges, to take a look at Mme. Etienne Gruget's abode. The mystery on which so many lives hung was to be cleared up there. Ferragus was there, and Ferragus held all the ends of the threads in this obscure business.—Was not the connection between Mme. Jules, her husband, and this man the Gordian knot of a tragedy stained even now with blood? Nor should the sword be wanting to cut asunder the tightest of all bonds.

The house belonged to the class commonly known as *cabajoutis*—an expressive name given by working people in

Paris to patchwork buildings, as they may be called. Several houses, originally separate, have sometimes been run into one, according to the fancy of the various proprietors who successively enlarged them; or they were begun and left unfinished for a time, and afterward resumed and completed. Unlucky dwellings are they that have passed, like sundry nations, under the rule of several dynasties of capricious rulers. The various stories and the windows do not belong to each other, to borrow one of the most picturesque of painter's words; every detail, even the decoration outside, clashes with the rest of the building. The *cabajoutis* is to Parisian street architecture what the *capharnaüm*, or lumber-room, is to the house—a regular rubbish-heap where the most unlikely things are shot down together pell-mell.

"Mme. Etienne?" Jules asked of the portress.

That functionary was installed in the great centre doorway in a sort of hencoop, a little wooden house on wheels, not unlike the cabins which the police authorities put up at every cabstand.

"Eh?" said the portress, laying down the stocking which she was knitting. The living accessories which contribute to the general effect of any portion of the great monster Paris, fit in, as a rule, remarkably well with the character of their surroundings. The porter, concierge, Swiss, or whatever you may choose to call this indispensable muscle in the monster's economy, is always in keeping with the quarter of which he is an integral part; very often he is the Quarter incarnate. The concierge of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, an idle being embroidered at every seam, speculates in stocks and shares; in the Chaussée d'Antin, the porter is a comfortable personage; in the neighborhood of the Bourse, he reads the newspaper; in the Faubourg Montmartre, he carries on some industry or other. In low neighborhoods the portress is a worn-out prostitute; in the Marais she keeps herself respectable, she is apt to be peevish, she has her "ways."

At sight of Jules, the portress of the Rue des Enfants-

Rouges stirred up the dying embers of block fuel in her foot-warmer, taking a knife for the purpose. Then she said, "You want Mme. Etienne; do you mean Mme. Etienne Gruget?"

"Yes," said Jules Desmarets, with a touch of vexation.

"She that works at trimmings?"

"Yes."

"Very well, sir," and emerging from her cage, she laid a hand on Jules's arm and drew him to the further end of a long narrow passage, vaulted like a cellar; "you go up the second staircase opposite, just across the yard. Do you see the windows with the gillyflowers? That's where Mme. Etienne lives."

"Thank you, madame. Is she alone, do you think?"

"Why shouldn't she be alone when she is a lone woman?"

Jules sprang noiselessly up a very dark staircase, every step incrusted with dried lumps of mud deposited by the lodgers' boots. He found three doors on the second floor, but no sign of gillyflowers. Luckily for him, some words were written in chalk on the grimiest and greasiest of the three—*Ida will be back at nine o'clock to-night.*

"Here it is," said Jules to himself

He tugged at an old blackened bell-pull, with a fawn's foot attached, and heard the smothered tinkle of a little cracked bell, and the yapping of an asthmatic little dog. He could tell by the sound that the bell made inside that the room was so lumbered up with things that there was no room for an echo—a characteristic trait of workmen's lodgings and little households generally, where there is neither space nor air. Jules looked about involuntarily for the gillyflowers, and found them at last on the window-sill, between two pestiferous sinks. Here were flowers, a garden two feet long and six inches wide, and a sprouting grain of wheat—all life condensed into that narrow space, and not one of life's miseries lacking! A ray of sunlight shone down, as if in pity on the sickly blossoms and the superb green column of wheat-stalk, bringing out the indescribable

color peculiar to Paris slums; dust, grease, and inconceivable filth incrusted and corroded the rubbed, discolored, damp walls, the worm-eaten balusters, the gaping window-sashes, the doors that once had been painted red. In another moment he heard an old woman's cough and the sound of heavy feet dragging painfully along in list slippers. This must be Ida Gruget's mother. She opened the door, came out upon the landing, raised her face to his, and said: "Ah! it's M. Bocquillon! Why, no it isn't. My word! how like you are to M. Bocquillon! You are a brother of his perhaps? What can I do for you, sir? Just step inside."

Jules followed her into the first room, and caught a general impression of bird-cages, pots and pans, stoves, furniture, little earthenware dishes full of broken meat, or milk for the dog and cats; a wooden clock-case, blankets, Eisen's engravings, and a heap of old ironmongery piled up with the most curiously grotesque effect. It was a genuine Parisian *capharnaüm*; nothing was lacking, not even a few odd numbers of the "Constitutionnel."

"Just come in here and warm yourself," said the widow Gruget, but prudence prevailed. Jules was afraid that Ferragus might overhear, and wondered whether the bargain which he proposed to make had not better be concluded in the outer room; just then, however, a hen came cackling down a staircase and cut short his inward conference. He made up his mind and followed Ida's mother into the next room, where a fire was burning. A wheezy little pug-dog, a dumb spectator, followed them, and scrambled up on an old stool. Mme. Gruget's request to come in and get warm was prompted by the very coxcombry of poverty on the brink of destitution. Her stock-pot completely hid a couple of smouldering sticks which ostentatiously shunned each other. A skimmer lay on the floor, with the handle among the ashes. On the wooden ledge above the fireplace, amid a litter of wools, cotton-reels, and odds and ends, needed for the manufacture of trimmings, stood a little waxen crucifix under a shade made of pieces of glass joined together with

strips of bluish paper. Jules looked round at the furniture with a curiosity in which self-interest was blended, and in spite of himself he showed his secret satisfaction.

"Well, sir, do you think you can do with my furniture?" inquired the widow, sitting down in a yellow cane-seated armchair, her headquarters apparently; for it contained her pocket-handkerchief, her snuff-box, some half-peeled vegetables, her spectacles, an almanac, a length of galoon on which she was at work, a pack of greasy playing-cards, and a couple of novels. All this sounded hollow. The piece of furniture on which the widow was "descending the river of life" was something like the comprehensive bag which women take on a journey, a sort of house in miniature, containing everything from the husband's portrait to the drop of balm tea in case she feels faint, from the sugar-plums for the little ones to sticking-plaster for cut fingers.

Jules made a careful survey of it all. He looked very closely at Mme. Gruget herself, with her gray eyes, denuded of lashes and eyebrows, at her toothless mouth, at the dark shades in her wrinkles, at her rusty net cap, with its yet more rusty frill, at her tattered cotton petticoats, her worn slippers, and charred foot-warmer, and then at the table covered with crockery, silks, and patterns of work in worsted and cotton, with the neck of a wine-bottle rising out of the middle of the litter, and said within himself, "This woman has some passion, some failing that she keeps quiet; she is in my power."—Aloud he said with a significant gesture, "I have come to order some galoon of you, madame"; then lowered his voice to add, "I know that you have a lodger here, a man that goes by the name of Camuset."

The old woman looked up at once, but there was not a sign of surprise in her countenance.

"Look here, can he overhear us? There is a fortune involved for you, mind you."

"You can speak, sir, there is nothing to be afraid of; there is nobody here. There is somebody upstairs, but it is quite impossible that he should hear you."

"Ah! cunning old thing! She can give you a Norman's answer," thought Jules. "We may come to terms.—You need not trouble yourself to tell a lie, madame. To begin with, bear in mind that I mean no harm whatever to you, nor your invalid lodger with his blisters, nor to your daughter Ida the stay-maker, Ferragus's sweetheart. You see, I know all about it. Never mind, I have nothing to do with the police, and I want nothing that is likely to hurt your conscience.

"A young lady will come here to-morrow between nine and ten to have some talk with your daughter's sweetheart. I want to be somewhere near, so that I can hear and see everything without being heard or seen. You must arrange this for me, and I will give you two thousand francs down, and an annuity of six hundred francs. My notary shall draw up the agreement this evening in your presence, and I will give the money into his hands to pay over to you to-morrow after this meeting at which I wish to be present, when I shall have proof of your good faith."

"It will not do any harm to my daughter, will it, my dear gentleman?" she returned, on the watch like a suspicious cat.

"None whatever, madame. But, at the same time, your daughter is behaving very badly to you, it seems to me. When a man as rich and powerful as Ferragus is fond of her, it ought to be easy to make you more comfortable than you appear to be."

"Ah, my dear gentleman, not so much as a miserable ticket for the Ambigu or the Gaieté, where she can go whenever she likes. It is shameful. And I that sold my silver spoons, and am eating now off German silver in my old age, all to apprentice that girl, and give her a business where she could coin gold if she chose. For as to that, she takes after her mother; she is as neat fingered as a fairy, it must be said in justice to her. At any rate, she might as well hand over her old silk dresses to me, so fond as I am of wearing silk; but no, sir. She goes to the Cadran bleu, to dine at fifty francs a head, and rolls in her

carriage like a princess, and doesn't care a rap for her mother. God Almighty! we bring these scatter-brained girls into the world, and it is not the best that could be said for us. A mother, sir, and a good mother, too, for I have hidden her giddiness, and cosseted her to that degree that I took the bread out of my mouth to stuff her with all that I had! Well, and that is not enough, but she must come and coax you, and then wish you 'Good day, mother!' That is the way they do their duty to them that brought them into the world! Just let them go their ways. But she will have children some day or other, and then she will know what it is for herself; bad bargains they are, but one loves them, all the same."

"What, does she do nothing for you?"

"Nothing? Oh, no, sir, I don't say that. If she did nothing at all for me, it would be rather too bad. She pays the rent, and she gives me firewood and thirty-six francs a month. But is it right, sir, that I should have to go on working at my age; I am fifty-two, and my eyes are weak of an evening? And what is more, why won't she have me with her? If she is ashamed of me, she may as well say so at once. You had need to bury yourself, and that is the truth, for these beastly children that forget all about you before they have so much as shut the door."

She drew her handkerchief from her pocket, and a lottery ticket fell out, but she picked it up in a moment.

"*Quien!* that is the rate-collector's receipt."

Jules suddenly guessed the reason of the prudent parsimony of which the mother complained, and felt the more sure that the Widow Gruget would agree to his proposal.

"Very well, madame," he said, "in that case you will accept my offer."

"Two thousand francs down, did you say, sir? and six hundred francs a year?"

"I have changed my mind, madame. I will promise you only three hundred francs of annuity. The arrange-

ment suits me better. But I will pay you five thousand francs down. You would rather have it so, would you not?"

"Lord, yes, sir."

"You will be more comfortable, you can go to the Ambigu Comique, or Franconi's, or anywhere else, and go comfortably in a cab."

"Oh, I do not care about Franconi's at all, being as you don't hear talk of it. And if I agree to take the money, sir, it is because it will be a fine thing for my child. And I shall not be living on her. Poor little thing, after all, I don't grudge her such pleasure as she gets. Young things must have amusement, sir. And so, if you will assure me that I shall be doing nobody any harm—"

"Nobody," repeated Jules. "But see now, how are you going to set about it?"

"Oh, well, sir, if M. Ferragus has just a little drink of poppy water to-night, he will sleep sound, the dear man! And much he stands in need of sleep, in such pain as he is, for he suffers so that it makes you sorry to see it. And by the by, just tell me what sort of a notion it is for a healthy man to have his back burned to cure the neuralgia that does not trouble him once in two years?—But to go back to our business, sir. My neighbor that lives just above has left her key with me; her room is next door to M. Ferragus's bedroom. She has gone to the country for ten days. So if you have a hole made to-night in the partition wall, you can look in and hear at your ease. There is a locksmith, a great friend of mine, a very nice man, that talks like an angel; he will do that for me, and nobody any the wiser."

"Here are a hundred francs for him. You must come this evening to M. Desmarets'; he is a notary; here is his address. The paper will be ready at nine o'clock, but—mum!"

"Right; mum, as you say. Good-day, sir."

Jules went home again, almost soothed by the certainty

of knowing everything to-morrow. He found the letter, sealed flawlessly again, in the porter's room.

"How are you?" he asked his wife, in spite of the coolness between them, so difficult is it to break from the old habits of affection.

"Rather better, Jules," she answered in winning tones; "will you dine here with me?"

"Yes. Stay, here is something that Fouquereau gave me for you," and he handed her the letter. At the sight of it Clémence's white face flushed a deep red; the sudden crimson sent an intolerable pang through her husband.

"Is that joy?" laughed he, "or relief from suspense?"

"Oh! many things," she said, as she looked at the seal.

"I will leave you, madame."

He went down to his office and wrote to his brother about the annuity for the Widow Gruget. When he came back again, dinner was ready on a little table by Clémence's bedside, and Joséphine waited upon them.

"If I were not lying in bed, what a pleasure it would be to me to serve you!" she said, when Joséphine had gone. "Oh, and even on my knees," she went on, passing her white fingers through Jules's hair. "Dear noble heart! you were very merciful and good to me just now. You have done me more good by your trust in me than all the doctors in the world could do with their prescriptions. Your woman's delicacy—for you can love as a woman can—shed balm in my soul; I feel almost well again. There is a truce. Jules, come closer, let me kiss you."

Jules could not forego the joy of Clémence's kiss, and yet it was not without something like remorse in his heart. He felt small before this woman, in whose innocence he was always tempted to believe. There was a sort of sorrowful gladness about Clémence. A chastened hope shone through the troubled expression of her face. They seemed both alike unhappy that the deceit must be kept up; another kiss, and they must tell each other all; they could endure their pain no longer.

"To-morrow evening, Clémence?"

"No, monsieur, to-morrow at noon you shall know everything, and you will kneel before your wife. Ah! no, you shall not humble yourself. No, all is forgiven you.—No, you have done no wrong. Listen. Yesterday you shattered me very ruthlessly, but life perhaps might not have been complete if I had not known that anguish; it is a dark shadow to bring out the brightness of days like heaven."

"You are bewitching me," Jules exclaimed, "and you would give me remorse."

"Poor love, fate overrules us, and I cannot help my destiny. I am going out to-morrow."

"When?"

"At half-past nine."

"Clémence, you must be very careful. You must consult Dr. Desplein and old Haudry."

"I shall consult my own heart and courage only."

"I will leave you free. I shall not come to see you till noon."

"Will you not stay with me a little while to-night? I am not ill now—"

Jules finished his work and came back to sit with her. He could not keep away. Love was stronger in him than all his griefs.

Next morning, at nine o'clock, Jules slipped out of the house, hurried to the Rue des Enfants-Rouges, climbed the stairs, and rang the bell at the Widow Gruget's door.

"Ah! You are a man of your word, punctual as sunrise," was old Mme. Gruget's greeting. "Come in, sir.—I have a cup of coffee and cream ready for you in case—" she added, when the door was closed. "Oh! and genuine cream, a little jar that I saw them fill with my own eyes at the cowkeeper's near by in the Marché des Enfants-Rouges."

"Thank you, no, madame, nothing. Show me upstairs—"

"Very good, my dear gentleman. Step this way."

She showed Jules into a room just above her own, and pointed triumphantly to a hole about as large as a two-franc piece, cut during the night so as to correspond with a rose in the pattern of the paper in Ferragus's room. The opening had been made above a cupboard on either side the wall; the locksmith had left no trace of his handiwork; and from below it was very difficult to see this improvised loophole in a dark corner. If Jules meant to see or hear anything, he was obliged to stay there in a tolerably cramped position, perched on the top of a step which the Widow Gruget had thoughtfully placed for him.

"There's a gentleman with him," she said, as she went. And, in fact, Jules saw that some one was busy dressing a line of blisters raised on Ferragus's shoulders. He recognized Ferragus from M. de Maulincour's description of the man.

"When shall I be all right, do you think?" asked the patient.

"I do not know," said the other; "but from what the doctors say, seven or eight more dressings will be needed at least."

"Very well, see you again this evening," returned Ferragus, holding out a hand to the man as he adjusted the last bandage.

"This evening," returned the other, shaking Ferragus cordially by the hand. "I should be glad to see you out of your pain."

"At last M. de Funcal's papers are to be handed over to-morrow, and Henri Bourignard is really dead," continued Ferragus. "Those two unlucky letters that cost us so dear have been destroyed, so I shall be somebody, socially speaking; a man among men again, and I am quite as good as the sailor whom the fishes have eaten. God knows whether it is for my own sake that I have taken a count's title."

"Poor Gratien! you are the best head among us, our

beloved brother, the Benjamin of the band. You know that."

"Good-by; take good care of my Maulincour."

"You can set your mind at rest on that score."

"Hey, Marquis!" cried the convict.

"What?"

"Ida is capable of anything after the scene yesterday evening. If she flings herself into the river, I certainly shall not fish her out; she will the better keep the secret of my name, the only secret she knows; but look after her, for, after all, she is a kind creature."

"Very well."

The stranger went. Ten minutes afterward Jules heard the unmistakable rustle of silk, and almost knew the sound of his wife's footsteps, not without a fevered shiver.

"Well, father, poor father, how are you? How brave you are!" It was Clémence who spoke.

"Come here, child," said Ferragus, holding out his hand.

And Clémence bent her forehead for his kiss.

"Let us see you, what is it, poor little girl? What new troubles?—"

"Troubles, father? It is killing me, killing the daughter who loves you so. As I wrote to tell you yesterday, you absolutely must use that fertile brain of yours to find some way of seeing poor Jules this very day. If you only knew how good he has been to me in spite of suspicions that seemed so well founded! Love is my life, father. Do you wish to see me die? Oh! I have been through so much as it is, and my life is in danger, I feel it."

"To lose you, my child! to lose you for a miserable Parisian's curiosity! I would set Paris on fire. Ah! you know what a lover is, but what a father is you do not know."

"You frighten me, father, when you look like that. Do not put two such different sentiments in the balance. I had my husband before I knew that my father was living—"

"If your husband was the first to set a kiss upon your forehead, I was the first to let tears fall there," said Fer-

ragus. "Reassure yourself, Clémence, open your heart to me. I love you well enough to be happy in the knowledge that you are happy; although your father is almost nothing in your heart, while you fill his."

"Ah, God! such words make me too happy. You make me love you more than ever, and it seems to me that I am robbing Jules. But just think that he is in despair, my good father. What shall I tell him in two hours' time?"

"Child, do you think that I waited for your letter to save you from this threatened unhappiness? What came to those who took it into their heads to meddle with your happy life, or to come between us? Why, have you never recognized a second Providence watching over you? And you do not know that twelve men, full of vigor in mind and body, are like an escort about your love and your life, always ready to do any deed to save you? And the father who used to risk his life to see you as you took your walks; or came at night to see you in your little cot in your mother's room; that father who, from the memory of your childish kisses, and from these alone, drew strength to live when a man of honor must take his own life to escape a shameful fate;—how should not he—how should not *I*, in short, that draw breath only through your lips—see only with your eyes, feel through your heart, how should not I defend you with a lion's claws, and a father's soul, when you are all that I have, my life, my daughter? . . . Why, since the angel died, that was your mother once, I have dreamed only one dream—of the joy of calling you my daughter openly, of clasping you in my arms before heaven and earth, of killing the convict . . ." (he paused for a moment)—"of giving you a father," he continued; "I saw a time when I could grasp your husband's hand without a blush, and live fearlessly in both your hearts, and say to the world, 'This is my child!'—in short, I had visions of being a father at my ease."

"Oh! father, father!"

"After many efforts, after searching the world over, my friends have found me a man's shape to fill," continued Fer-

ragus. "In a few days' time I shall be M. de Funcal, a Portuguese count. There, dear child, there are few men of my age that would have patience to learn Portuguese and English, with which that confounded naval officer was perfectly acquainted."

"My dear father!"

"Every contingency is provided for. In a few days His Majesty, John VI., King of Portugal, will be my accomplice. So you only need a little patience when your father had much. But for me it was quite natural. What would I not do to reward your devotion during these three years? To come so dutifully to see your old father, risking your happiness as you did."

"Father!" Clémence took Ferragus's hands and kissed them.

"Come! a little more courage, Clémence; let us keep the fatal secret to the end. Jules is not an ordinary man; and yet, do we know whether with his lofty character and great love he will not feel something like disrespect for the daughter of—"

"Ah! you have read your child's soul," cried Clémence; "I have no fear but that," she added, in a heartrending tone. "The thought freezes my blood. But remember, father, I have promised him the truth in two hours."

"Well, my child, tell him to go to the Portuguese Embassy to see the Comte de Funcal, your father; I will be there."

"And how about M. de Maulincour who talked about Ferragus? Ah, dear! to tell lie upon lie, what torture, father!"

"To whom are you speaking? Yet a few days, and no man alive can give me the lie. And besides, M. de Maulincour is in no condition to remember anything by this time— There, there, silly child, dry your tears, and bear in mind that—"

A dreadful cry rang through the next room, where Jules Desmarets was hiding.

"My girl, my poor girl!" The wail came through the

loophole above the cupboard; Ferragus and Mme. Jules were terror-stricken by it.

"Go and see what it is, Clémence."

Clémence fled down the narrow staircase, found the door of Mme. Gruget's room standing wide open, and heard her voice ring out overhead. The sound of sobbing attracted her to the fatal room, and these words reached her ears as she entered: "It is you, sir, with your notions, that have been the death of her!"

"Hush, wretched woman!" exclaimed Jules, trying to stop her cries with his pocket-handkerchief.

"Murder! Help!" cried the Widow Gruget. At that moment Clémence came in, saw her husband, shrieked aloud, and fled.

There was a long pause. "Who will save my daughter?" asked Mme. Gruget. "You have murdered her."

"And how?" asked Jules mechanically, stupefied by the thought that his wife had recognized him.

"Read that, sir," said she, bursting into tears. "Will any money comfort me for this?" and she held out a letter:

"Good-by, mother. I leave you all I have. I ask your pardon for my faults, and for this last grief I am bringing on you by making away with myself. Henri, that I love better than myself, said that I had done him harm, and he would have no more to do with me afterward; I have lost all hopes of establishing myself, and I shall go and throw myself into the river. I am going down below Neuilly, so as they shall never put me in the Morgue. If Henri doesn't hate me after I've punished myself with death, ask him to bury a poor girl whose heart only beat for him, and to forgive me, for I did wrong to meddle with what was no concern of mine. Dress his blisters carefully. He has suffered a deal, the poor dear. But I shall have as much courage to drown myself as he had to have himself burned. There are some corsets ready; see that they are sent home. And pray God for your daughter. IDA."

"Take the letter to M. de Funcal, in the next room. He is the only man that can save your daughter, if it is not too late." And Jules vanished, flying like a criminal when the deed is done. His legs shook under him. His swelling heart was sending a hotter and fuller tide through his veins, with a mightier pulse than he had ever known before. The most conflicting thoughts filled his mind, and yet one idea prevailed above them all. He had been disloyal to the one whom he loved best in the world; he could not compound with his conscience, its voice grew in proportion to the extent of the wrong that he had done, till the clamor filled him, as passion had filled his inmost being during the bitterest hours of the suspense which had shaken him but a short while ago.

He dared not go home, and spent most of the day in wandering about Paris. Upright as he was, he shrank from confronting the blameless brows of the wife he had not rightly valued. The sin is in proportion to the purity of the conscience; and an act which for some is scarcely a mistake will weigh like a crime upon a few white souls. Is there not, indeed, a divine significance in that word white? and does not the slightest spot on maiden garments degrade them at once to the level of the beggar's rags? Between the two there is but the difference between misfortune and error. Repentance is not proportioned to the sin; God makes no distinctions; it is as hard to wipe out one stain as to wash away the sins of a lifetime.

These thoughts lay heavily on Jules's soul. Justice is not more inexorable than passion, nor more ruthless in its reasoning; for passion has a conscience of its own, infallible as instinct. He went home again in despair, overwhelmed with a sense of the wrong he had done; but, in spite of himself, joy in his wife's innocence was visible in his pale face. He went to her room with a fast-throbbing heart, and found her lying in bed. She was in a high fever. He sat down by the bedside, took her hand, and kissed it and covered it with tears.

"Dear angel, they are tears of repentance," he said, when they were alone.

"What is there to repent of?" she asked.

She bent her head down on the pillow as she spoke, and shut her eyes, and lay quite still, fearing, with a mother's, an angel's delicacy, to betray her pain and alarm her husband. The whole woman was summed up in those words. There was a long silence. Jules, fancying that Clémence was asleep, stole out to ask Joséphine about her mistress.

"Madame came in half dead, sir. We sent for M. Haudry."

"Has he been? What did he say?"

"Nothing, sir. He did not seem satisfied, he said that no one was to be allowed in the room except the nurse, and he would come again in the course of the evening."

Jules stole softly back to his wife, and sat down in an armchair by the bedside. He did not move; his eyes never left hers. Whenever Clémence looked up she met their gaze, and from under her lashes there escaped a tender, sorrowful, impassioned glance—a glance that fell like a fiery dart in the inmost soul of the man thus generously absolved, and loved through everything by her whom he had done to death. Forebodings of death lay between them; death was a presence felt alike by both. Their looks were blended in the same agony, as their two hearts had been made one through love equally felt and shared. There were no questions now, but a dreadful certainty. In the wife, a perfect generosity; in the husband, a hideous remorse; and in both their souls one vision of the End, and the same consciousness of the inevitable.

There was a moment when Jules, thinking that his wife was asleep, kissed her softly on the forehead, gazed long at her, and said to himself, "Ah, God! leave this angel with me yet a while longer, that I may expiate my sins by long adoration. . . . Heroic as a daughter; what word could describe her as a wife?"

Clémence opened her eyes; they were full of tears.

"You hurt me," she said in a weak voice.

It was growing late. Dr. Haudry came and asked Jules to leave the room while he saw his patient; and when he came out afterward there was no need to ask any questions—a gesture told all.

"Send for any of my colleagues in whom you have most confidence," said the doctor; "I may be mistaken."

"But, doctor, tell me the truth. I am not a child, I can hear it; and besides, I have the strongest reasons for wishing to know it, there are accounts to settle—"

"Mme. Jules is death-stricken," said the doctor. "There is something on her mind which complicates the physical illness; the situation was dangerous as it was, and repeated imprudence has made it worse— Getting out of bed in the night with bare feet; going out on foot yesterday, and in the carriage to-day, when I forbade it, she has done her best to kill herself. Still my verdict is not final; there is youth, and astonishing nervous strength—it might be worth while to risk all to save all by some violent reagent; but I could not take it upon myself to prescribe the treatment, I should not even advise it. I should oppose it in consultation."

Jules went back to the room again. For eleven days he stayed night and day by his wife's bedside, sleeping only in the daytime, with his head on the bedfoot. Never did any man carry the ambition of devotion so far as Jules Desmarets. In a jealous anxiety to do everything himself, he would not allow any one else to perform the least service for his wife; he sat with her hand in his, as if in this way he could give of his own vitality to her. There were times of doubt and fallacious joy, good days, and an improvement, and crises, and the dreadful reverberations of the coming death, that hesitates while life hangs in the balance, but strikes at last. Mme. Jules was never too weak to smile; she was sorry for her husband, knowing that very soon he would be left alone. It was the twofold agony of life and love: but as life ebbed, love grew stronger.

Then came a dreadful night, when Clémence suffered from

the delirium that always comes before death in young creatures. She talked aloud of her happy love, of her father, of her mother's deathbed revelations, and the charge she had laid upon her daughter. Clémence was struggling, not for life, but for the passionate love that she could not let go.

"God in Heaven!" she cried out, "do not let him know how I want to have him die with me."

Jules, unable to bear the sight, happened to be in the next room, and so did not hear the wish that he would have fulfilled.

When the crisis was over, Mme. Jules found strength. Next day she looked lovely and peaceful once more; she talked, she began to hope, and made a pretty invalid's toilet. She wanted to be alone all day, and entreated her husband to leave her so earnestly that he was fain to grant her wish, as a child's pleading is always granted. Jules, moreover, had need of the day. He went to M. de Maulincour to claim the duel to which both had agreed. He obtained an interview with the cause of his troubles, not without great difficulty; but the Vidame, informed that it was an affair of honor, gave way in obedience to the prejudices which had always ruled his life, and brought Jules up to the Baron de Maulincour.

"Oh, it really is he," said the Commander, indicating the figure in the armchair by the fireside.

"He? who? Jules?" asked the dying man, in a broken voice.

Auguste had lost the one central faculty by which we live—memory. At sight of him M. Desmarets shrank back in horror. He could not recognize the youthful, fine gentleman in this Thing, for which there was no name in any language, to quote Bossuet's saying. It was, in truth, a white-haired corpse, a skeleton scarcely covered by the wrinkled, shrivelled, withered skin. The eyes were pale and fixed, the mouth gaped hideously, like the mouth of an imbecile, or of some debauchee dying of excess. Not the faintest spark of intelligence was left to the forehead, nor indeed to

any other feature; nor was there any appearance of color or of circulating blood in the flabby flesh. These were the shrunken, dissolving remains of what had been a human being, a man reduced to the condition of the monstrosities preserved in spirits at the Muséum. Jules fancied he could see Ferragus's terrible head rising above that visage, and his hate shrank appalled at the completeness of the vengeance. Clémence's husband could find it in his heart to pity the unrecognizable wreck of what had been so lately a young man.

"The duel has taken place," said the Vidame.

"Monsieur de Maulincour has taken many lives," Jules exclaimed in distress.

"And the lives of his nearest and dearest," added the old noble. "His grandmother is dying of grief, and I perhaps shall follow her to the tomb."

Mme. Jules grew worse from hour to hour on the day after the visit. She took advantage of a momentary strength to draw a letter from her pillow, and gave it quickly to Jules with a sign which no one could mistake; she wished to spend her last breath of life in a kiss. He took it, and she died.

Jules dropped down half dead, and was taken away to his brother's house. There, as in the midst of tears and ravings he bewailed his absence of the day before, his brother told him how anxious Clémence had been that he should not be present during the Church's administration of the last sacrament to the dying, that rite so terribly impressive for a sensitive imagination.

"You could not have borne it," said his brother. "I myself could scarcely endure to see it, and every one broke out into weeping. Clémence looked like a saint. She summoned up her strength to bid us good-by; it was heartrending to hear that voice for the last time. And when she asked pardon for any involuntary unkindness to those who had served her, a wail went up among the sobs, a wail—"

"Enough, that will do."

He wanted to be alone to read his wife's last thoughts,

now that she, the woman whom the world had admired, had faded away like a flower:

"This is my will, my dearest. Why should not people dispose of their heart's treasures, as of everything else that is theirs? The love in my heart—was it not all that I had? And here I want to think of nothing but love; it was all that your Clémence brought you, it is all that she can leave you when she dies. Jules, I am loved again, I can die a happy woman. The doctors will have their theories of my death; but no one knows the real cause but I. I will tell you about it, in spite of the pain it may give you. I am dying because I kept a secret that could not be told, but I will not carry away a secret unsaid in the heart that is wholly yours.

"I was nurtured and brought up in complete solitude, far away from the vices and deceits of the world, by the amiable woman whom you knew, Jules. Society did justice to the conventional qualities by which a woman gains social popularity; but I, in secret, enjoyed communion with an angel's soul; I could love the mother who gave me a childhood of joy without bitterness, knowing well why I loved her. Which means, does it not, that she was twice loved? Yes. I loved and feared and respected her, yet neither the fear nor the respect oppressed my heart. I was all in all to her; she was all in all to me. Through nineteen years of happiness known to the full, nineteen years without a care, my soul, lonely amid the world which murmured about me, mirrored nothing but the one most pure vision of my mother, and my heart beat for her alone. I was conscientiously devout. I was glad to lead a pure life in the sight of God. My mother cultivated all noble and lofty feelings and thoughts in me. Ah! it gladdens me to own it, Jules. I know now that my girlhood was complete, that I came to you with a maiden heart.

"When I came out of the profound solitude; when for the first time I smoothed my hair beneath a wreath of almond blossom, and added a few knots of satin ribbon to my

white gown, thinking how pretty they looked, and wondering about this world that I was to see, and felt curious to see; well, Jules, even then that simple girlish coquetry was for you; at my first entrance into that new world I saw *you*—I saw your face; it stood out from all the others; you were handsome, I thought; your voice and your manner prepossessed me in your favor; and when you came up and spoke to me, and your forehead flushed and your voice was tremulous—the memory of that moment sets my heart throbbing even now as I write to you to-day, when I think of it for the last time. Our love has been from the first the keenest of sympathies, and it was not long before we divined each other, and began to share, as we have shared ever since, the uncounted joys of love.

"From that day my mother had but the second place in my heart. I told her so, and she smiled, my adorable mother! And since then I have been yours—yours wholly. That is my life, my whole life, my dear husband.

"And this is what remains to be said.

"One evening, a few days before my mother died, she told me the secret of her life, not without hot tears. I loved her more, far more, when I heard in the presence of the priest who absolved her that there was such a thing as passion condemned by the world and the Church. Yet, surely, God must be merciful when love is the sin of souls as loving as hers, even though that angel could not bring herself to repent of it. She loved with all her heart, Jules, for all her heart was love. And so I prayed for her every day, without judging her. From that time I knew why her mother's love had been so deep and tender; from that time I knew too that in Paris there was some one living for whom I was everything—life and love. I knew, besides, that your success was due to him, and that he liked you, and that he was an outlaw with a blighted name, and that these things troubled him less for his own sake than for mine—for both our sakes. —My mother had been his one comfort; I promised to take her place now that she was dead. With all the enthusiasm

of an unsophisticated nature, I thought of nothing but the joy of sweetening the bitterness of her last moments, so I pledged myself to continue her work of secret charity—the charity of the heart.

"I saw my father for the first time by the bed on which my mother had just drawn her last breath. When he raised his tear-filled eyes, it was to find all his dead hopes once more in me. I vowed, not to lie, but to keep silence; and what woman could have broken that silence? Therein lay my mistake, a mistake expiated by death—I could not trust you, Jules. But fear is so natural to a woman, especially to a wife who knows all that she has to lose. I was afraid for my love. It seemed to me that my father's secret might cost me my happiness; and the more I loved, the more I dreaded the loss of love. I dared not confess this to my father; it would have hurt him, and in his position any wound smarts keenly. But while he said not a word to me, he felt my fears. The true father's heart trembled for my happiness, as I trembled for myself, and shrank from speaking of it with the same delicacy which kept me mute.

"Yes, Jules, I thought that some day you might not love Gratien's daughter as you loved your Clémence. But for that dread in the depths of my heart, could I have hidden anything from you—from you that filled even this inmost recess?

"When that odious, miserable officer spoke to you, I was forced to tell a lie. That day I knew sorrow for the second time in my life, and that sorrow has grown day by day till this last moment of converse with you. What does my father's position matter now? You know everything. With love to aid me, I might have wrestled with disease and borne any pain; but I cannot smother the voice of doubt. Is it not possible that the knowledge of my origin may take something from your love, Jules, and weaken it, and spoil its purity? And this fear nothing can extinguish in me. *This* is the cause of my death.

"I could not live in continual dread of a word or a look, one word which might never be uttered, one glance that would never be given; but, I cannot help it—*I am afraid!* I have your love till I die, that comforts me. I have known for four years past that my father and his friends have all but turned the world upside down to act a lie to the world. They have bought a dead man, a reputation, and a fortune, and all to give a new life to a living man, and a social position to me—all this for your sake, for our sakes! We were to know nothing about it. Well, my death will probably save my father from the necessity of lying any longer, for he will die when I am dead.

"So, farewell, Jules. I have put my whole heart here in this letter. When I show you my love in the innocence of its dread, do I not leave you my very soul? I should not have had strength to tell you this, but I could write it for you.

"I have just made confession of the sins of my lifetime to God; I have promised, it is true, to think of nothing now but the Father in heaven; but I could not resist the pleasure of confession to you, that are all to me upon earth. Alas! who would not forgive me this last sigh between the life that is no more and the life to come? So, farewell, Jules, my beloved; I am going to God, with whom there is love unclouded for evermore, to whom you also will come one day. There, at the foot of the Throne of God, together for evermore, we shall love through all the ages. That hope alone can comfort me. If I am worthy to go first, I shall follow you through your life, my spirit will be with you and around you, for you must live on here below a while. Lead a holy life, to rejoin me the more surely. You can do so much good here on this earth! Is it not an angel's mission for a stricken soul to spread happiness around, to give that which he has not?

"I leave the unhappy to your care; how should I be jealous of their smiles, their tears? We shall find a great charm in these sweet charities. Cannot we be together still, if you

will associate my name, your Clémence's name, with every kindly deed? When two have loved as we have loved, Jules, there is nothing left but God; God does not lie, God does not fail. Give all your love to Him, I ask it of you. Cultivate good in those who suffer, comfort the afflicted among the Church on earth.

"Adieu, dear heart that I have filled. I know you, I know that you will not love twice; and I can die happy in a thought that would make any wife glad. Yes, I shall lie buried in your heart. Now that I have told you the story of my childhood, is not my whole life poured into your heart? I shall never be driven from it after I am dead. You have only known me in the flower of my youth; I shall leave nothing but regrets behind, and no disenchantment. Jules, that is a very happy death.

"May I ask one thing of you that have understood me so well, one thing needless to ask, no doubt—the fulfilment of a woman's fancy, of a wish prompted by a jealousy to which all women are subject? I beg of you to burn all that belonged to us, to destroy our room, and everything that may recall our love.

"Once again, farewell, a last farewell full of love, as my last thought will be, and my latest breath."

Jules finished the letter, and a frantic grief came upon his heart in terrible paroxysms which cannot be described. Every agony takes its own course, and obeys no fixed rule; some men stop their ears to hear no sound, and women sometimes close their eyes to shut out all sights; and here and there a great and powerful soul plunges into sorrow as into an abyss. Despair makes an end of all insincerities. Jules escaped from his brother's house, and returned to the Rue de Ménars, meaning to spend the night at his wife's side, and to keep that divine creature in sight till the last. As he went, with the recklessness of a man brought to the lowest depths of misery, he began to understand why Asiatic laws forbid widows to survive their husbands. He wanted

to die. He was in the fever of sorrow; the collapse had not yet set in.

He reached the sacred chamber without hindrance, saw Clémence lying on her deathbed, fair as a saint, her hair smoothed over her brows, her hands folded. She had been laid already in her shroud. The light of the tall candles fell upon a priest at his prayers, on Joséphine, who was crying in a corner, and on two men by the bed. One of these was Ferragus. He stood upright and motionless, gazing dry-eyed at his daughter, you might have taken his face for a bronze statue; he did not see Jules. The other was Jacquet—Jacquet, to whom Mme. Jules had always been kind. He had felt for her the respectful friendship that brings warmth to the heart without troubling it, a softened passion, love without its longings and its tumult, and now he had come religiously to pay his debt of tears, to bid a long adieu to his friend's wife, and set a first and last kiss on the forehead of the woman of whom he had tacitly made a sister.

All was silent there. This was not the Terrible Death of the Church, nor the pageantry of Death that passes through the streets; it was Death that glides in under the roof, Death in his pathetic aspects; this was a lying in state for the heart amid tears shed in secret.

Jules sat down beside Jacquet, squeezed his friend's hand, and thus without a word they stayed till the morning. When the candles burned faintly in the dawn, Jacquet thought of the painful scenes to come, and led Jules away into the next room. For a moment Clémence's husband looked full at her father, and Ferragus looked at Jules. Anguish questioned and sounded the depths of anguish, and both understood at a glance. A flash of rage glittered for an instant in Ferragus's eyes.

"It is your doing!" he thought.

"Why not have trusted me?" the other seemed to retort.

So might two tigers have seen the uselessness of a con-

flict, after eying each other during a moment of hesitation, without so much as a growl.

"Jacquet, did you see to everything?" asked Jules.

"Yes, to everything; and everywhere some one else had been before me and given orders and paid."

"He is snatching his daughter from me!" shouted Jules, in a paroxysm of despair.

He dashed into the bedroom. The father had gone. Clémence had been laid in her leaden coffin. One or two workmen were preparing to solder down the lid, and Jules retreated aghast. At the sound of the hammer he broke out into dull weeping.

"Jacquet," he said at length, "one idea stays with me after this dreadful night, just one thought, but I must realize it, cost what it may. Clémence shall not lie in a Paris cemetery. She shall be cremated, and I will keep her ashes beside me. Do not say a word about it to me, but just arrange to have it done. I shall shut myself up in *her* room and stay there till I am ready to go. No one shall come in but you to tell me what you have done. There, spare for nothing."

That morning Mme. Jules's coffin lay under the archway with lighted candles round it, and afterward was removed to St. Roch. The whole church was hung with black. The kind of display made for the funeral service had attracted a great many people. Everything, even the most heartfelt anguish, is a theatrical spectacle in Paris. There are people who will stand at the windows to watch curiously while a son weeps in his mother's funeral procession, just as there are others who want good seats to see an execution. No people in the world have such voracious eyes. But the curious in St. Roch were particularly astonished to find the six side chapels in the church likewise draped with black, and two men in mourning attending a mass for the dead in each. In the choir there were but two persons present at the funeral—M. Desmarets the notary, and Jacquet—the servants were beyond the screen.

The hangers-on of the church were puzzled by the splendor of the funeral and the insignificant number of mourners. Jules would have no indifferent persons.

High mass was celebrated with all the sombre grandeur of the funeral service. Thirteen priests from various parishes were there besides the officiating clergy of St. Roch. The sound of blended voices rose as the eight chanters, the priests, and the child-choristers sang alternately; and never perhaps was the *Dies iræ* more deeply impressive than at that moment, never did it strike an icier chill to the nerves of Christians by accident of birth, assembled there by chance, curiosity, and greed of sensation. From the side chapels children's voices, shrill with grief, rose wailing in the chorus. A dull note of dismay reverberated through the church; cries of anguish answered wails of terror on every side. That awful music spoke of agony unknown on earth, of secret friendship weeping for the dead. Never has any known religion given so powerful a rendering of the terrors of the soul, stripped violently of the body, and tossed as by tempest into the presence of the intolerable Majesty of God. Before that clamor of clamors, artists and their most impassioned work must shrink abashed. No, nothing can stand beside that music which gathers up all human passions, galvanizing them into a life beyond the grave, bringing them, yet palpitating, into the presence of the living God, the Avenger. Man's life, with all its developments, is embraced by that Canticle of Death; for the cries of children, mingled with the notes of deeper voices, recall the pains of cradled infancy, swelled by the sum of all the pain of life's later stages, by the full-toned bass, and the quavering notes of old men and of priests. Does not the volume of strident harmony, full of thunder and lightnings, speak to the most undaunted imagination, to the ice-bound heart, nay, to philosophists themselves? As you hear it, it seems that God thunders. The vaults of every church are cold no longer; they quiver, and find a voice, and pour forth fear with all the might of their

echoes. You seem to see visions of the uncounted dead rising and holding up their hands. It is not a father, a wife or child, that lies beneath the black drapery; it is Humanity emerging from the dust. It is impossible to be just to the Apostolic and Roman Catholic Church until you have passed through a supreme sorrow, and wept for the beloved dead lying beneath the cenotaph; until you have heard all the emotion which fills your heart, interpreted by that hymn of despair, by those cries that overwhelm the soul, by the religious awe that rises from strophe to strophe, eddying up to heaven, appalling, diminishing, exalting the soul, till as the last verse comes to an end you are left with the sense of Eternity. You have been wrestling with the great idea of the Infinite; and now all is hushed in the church. Not a word is uttered there. Unbelievers themselves "know not what ails them." Spanish genius alone could invest unspeakable sorrow with such transcendent majesty.

When the supreme ceremony was over, twelve men in mourning emerged from the chapels, and stood grouped around the coffin to hear the chant of hope which the Church raises for the Christian's soul before the human form is committed to earth. Then each of them entered a mourning coach, Jacquet and M. Desmarets took the thirteenth, and the servants followed on foot.

An hour afterward the twelve strangers were gathered about a grave, dug at the highest point of the cemetery familiarly known as Père-Lachaise; the coffin had just been lowered; a curious crowd had gathered from all parts of that public garden. The priest recited a short prayer, and flung a handful of earth over the mortal remains; and the sexton and his men having claimed their fee, hastily began to fill up the grave before going to another.

And here this story would seem to finish. Yet perhaps it would be incomplete if the practical effects of death should be forgotten at the close of a slight sketch of Parisian life,

and its capricious undulations. Death in Paris is unlike death in any other great city; few people know what it is to bring a heartfelt sorrow into conflict with civilization in the shape of the municipal authorities of Paris. Perhaps, too, the reader may feel sufficient interest in Ferragus XXIII. and Jules Desmarets to care to know what became of them. And in any case, there are plenty of people who like to know all about everything; and, as the most ingenious of French critics once said, would find out the chemistry of the combustion of the oil in Aladdin's lamp if they could.

Jacquet, being a civil servant, naturally applied to the authorities for permission to exhume and cremate Mme. Jules's body. The dead sleep under the protection of the Prefect of Police; to the Prefect of Police, therefore, Jacquet betook himself. That functionary required a formal application. A sheet of stamped paper must be purchased, sorrow must appear in the regulation form; and when a man is so overwhelmed with grief that words fail him, he must express himself in the peculiar idiom of red-tape, and translate his wishes into businesslike phrases with a marginal note.

The petitioner prays permission to cremate the body of his wife.

The head of the department, whose duty it was to draw up a report for the Prefect of Police, a member of the Council of State, glanced over the apostille, in which the object of the request was clearly stated by his own recommendation, and said: "But this is a serious question. It is impossible to draw up a report in less than a week."

Jacquet was obliged to explain the delay, and Jules thought of the words he had heard Ferragus utter, "Set Paris on fire!" Nothing seemed more natural than a thorough destruction of that receptacle of monstrous things.

"Why, there is nothing for it but to apply to the Home

Office and set your Minister on to the Home Secretary," he told Jacquet.

Jacquet accordingly applied to the Home Office, and asked for an audience, which he obtained—for that day fortnight. Jacquet was naturally persistent. He went, therefore, from department to department, and succeeded in reaching the private secretary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. With such influence he received a promise of a private interview with the Pacha of the Home Office, and a few lines written by the Autocrat of Foreign Affairs by way of passport. Jacquet now had hopes of carrying his point by storm. He was ready for every emergency with arguments and categorical answers. All ended in failure.

"This is no affair of mine," said the Minister. "The thing concerns the Prefect of Police. And what is more: no law gives a husband the custody of his wife's body, nor has a father a right to a child's corpse. It is a serious matter. It ought to be looked into, besides, in the interests of the public. The city of Paris might suffer. In short, if the matter were referred directly to me, I could not give a decision *hic et nunc;* a report would be required."

In the administrative system a "report" answers much the same ends as limbo in theology. Jacquet had met with the "report" craze before; nor had he neglected previous opportunities of groaning over the absurdities of red-tape. He knew that since the administrative Revolution of 1804, when the report had carried all before it in Government departments, the Minister had not yet been found that would take it upon himself to have an opinion, or give a decision on any matter, however small, until the thing had been winnowed, sifted, and thoroughly scrutinized by the scribblers and scratchers and sublime official intelligences of his department.

Jacquet—the man deserved to have a Plutarch for his biographer—Jacquet saw that he had set off on the wrong track, and defeated his own ends by trying to proceed by

the proper forms. He should simply have removed Mme. Jules's coffin after the service to one of the Desmarets' houses in the country. There the mayor of the village would have made no difficulty about gratifying the sorrowing widower's request. Constitutional and administrative legalism is sterile; it is a barren monster for nations and kings and the interests of private individuals; but the nations as yet have only learned to spell those principles that are written in blood; and as the evils of ruling by the letter of the law are never accompanied by strife and bloodshed, legalism reduces a nation to a dead level, and there is an end of it.

Jacquet, being a stickler for liberty, returned home, meditating by the way on the blessings of arbitrary government, for a man only criticises the law of the land by the light of his own passions. But when he came to talk to Jules, there was nothing for it but to deceive his friend; the unhappy man was in a high fever, and for a couple of days he stayed in bed.

That evening at dinner the Minister chanced to mention that the fancy had taken some one in Paris to have his wife's body cremated in the Roman fashion. And for a moment classical funeral rites were the talk of the clubs. As things ancient were coming into fashion, several people were of the opinion that it would be a fine thing to revive the funeral pyre for distinguished personages. Some were for, others against, the idea. Some held that there were so many great men that the practice would raise the price of fuel; they opined that with a nation so fond of the mental exercise of changing its opinions, it would be a ridiculous thing to see a whole Longchamp of ancestors trotted out in their urns at the expiration of a lease; while if the urns happened to be valuable, creditors (a race that never respect anything) would seize upon them, and they, with their contents of honorable dust, would be put up to public auction. Others retorted that it was scarcely possible for a man to insure a permanent residence for his grandparents in Père Lachaise; for that in

time the city of Paris would be compelled to order a St. Bartholomew of its dead. The cemeteries were invading the open country, and threatened to encroach upon the corn land of Brie. In short, the question raised one of the futile and ingenious discussions which, in Paris, too often aggravates deep-seated evils. Happily for Jules, he knew nothing of the conversation, jokes and epigrams with which his sorrow supplied the town.

The Prefect of Police took offence because M. Jacquet had gone straight to the Minister to avoid the delays and matured wisdom of the Board of Works. The exhumation of Mme. Jules's body was a question within the jurisdiction of the municipal police. Wherefore the Police Department was elaborating a sharp answer to the petition. A single demand is enough, the administration has a tight hold, and a thing once in its grasp is like to go a long way. Any matter, moreover, may be referred to the Council of State, another piece of machinery very hard to set in motion. Another day went by, and Jacquet made his friend understand that the idea must be given up; that in a city where the number of "tears" embroidered on the black trappings are prescribed, where the law recognizes seven classes of funerals, where land in which to bury the dead is sold by its weight in silver, where grief is exploited on a system of double entry, and the prayers of the Church are sold dear, or the vestry puts in a claim for a few extra voices in the "Dies iræ"—any deviation from the beaten rut traced out for grief by the authorities was impossible.

"It would have been one joy in my misery," said Jules; "I meant to go somewhere, a long way off, to die, and I wished when I lay in the grave to have Clémence in my arms. I did not know that officialdom could put out its claws to reach us even in our coffins."

He would go to see whether there was a little room for him beside his wife. So the friends went together to Père Lachaise. At the gateway they found a crowd of ciceroni waiting to guide sightseers through the labyrinth, as if Père

Lachaise were a museum or the Cour des Diligences or some other sight. It was impossible that Jules or Jacquet should find Clémence's tomb. Terrible agony! They went to consult the gatekeeper.

The dead have a concierge, and there are hours at which the dead cannot receive visitors. Only by shaking all the rules and regulations from top to bottom can any one obtain the right to go thither in the darkness to weep in silence and solitude over the grave which holds his beloved dead. There are summer regulations and winter regulations. Of all the concierges of Paris, the gatekeeper of Père Lachaise is the best off. There is no cord to pull, to begin with. Instead of a single room, he has a house, an establishment that cannot exactly be described as a government department, although there is a considerable staff attached, and the jurisdiction is wide, and the governor of the dead draws a salary and wields an immense power over a population who cannot possibly complain of him; he plays the despot at his ease. Neither is his abode exactly a place of business, albeit there are offices and books to be kept, and clerks to keep them, and receipts and expenditure and profits. And the gatekeeper himself is neither a Swiss nor a concierge nor a porter, for the door is always yawning wide for the dead; and though there certainly are monuments to be kept in order, he is not there to look after them. He is, in short, an anomaly which cannot be defined; his office is akin in one way or another to every power in existence, and yet he is a nobody, for his authority, like Death, by which it lives, lies completely beyond the pale. Nevertheless, exception as he is, he holds his tenure from the City of Paris, a creature as chimerical as the emblematical vessel on her coat-of-arms; an imaginary being swayed by hundreds of paws and claws which seldom move in concert; and as a result, her public servants are, to all intents and purposes, fixtures. The cemetery-keeper, therefore, is the concierge promoted to the rank of a public servant, a permanent element amid dissolution.

His place, for that matter, is no sinecure. No one can

be buried till the gatekeeper has seen the permit; and he is bound to give account of his dead. He can lay his finger on a spot in that huge burying ground to point out the six feet of earth in which some day you will lay all that you love, or hate, as the case may be—the woman you love or your unloved cousin. For, mind you, to this lodge all loves and hates must come at the last, and are duly docketed and passed through the office. The man keeps a register of sleeping-places for the dead; they go down on his list when they go down into the grave.

The gatekeeper has custodians under him, and gardeners and gravediggers and assistants. He is a personage. Mourners are not brought into direct contact with him as a rule; he only comes forward if something serious occurs, if one dead man is mistaken for another, or if a body is exhumed for a murder case, or a corpse comes to life again. The bust of the reigning sovereign presides in his room. Possibly he keeps other busts of departed monarchs, with various royal, imperial, or semi-royal persons, in a cupboard somewhere, a sort of miniature Père Lachaise for changes in the Government. In other respects, he is a public servant; an excellent man, a good husband and father, epitaphs apart; but—so much varied emotion has passed under his eyes in the shape of hearses! he has seen so many tears shed, both sham and real, and been acquainted with grief in so many shapes and in so many faces—with six millions of eternal sorrows, in short! For him, grief means a stone slab an inch thick, four feet high by twenty-two inches wide. As for regrets, they are one of the things to be put up with in his profession, and he never dines but he has witnessed torrents of tears shed by inconsolable affliction. Every other emotion finds him kindly and sympathetic; he too can shed tears over the tragic end of a stage hero like M. Germeuil in "L'Auberge des Adrets," he is moved when the man in the butter-colored breeches is murdered by Robert Macaire; but when it comes to a real genuine death, his heart is ossified. Deaths mean rows of figures for him; it is his business to tabulate statistics

in of the dead. And, as a last word, twice, or perhaps thrice, a century, it may happen that he has a sublime part to play, and then he is a hero at every hour—in time of Pestilence.

When Jacquet went in search of this absolute monarch, his majesty's temper had suffered somewhat.

"I told you," he cried, "to water all the flowers from the Rue Masséna to the Place Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angely! You fellows simply took not the least notice of what I told you. My patience! if the relatives take it into their heads to come, as it is a fine day, they will be throwing all the blame on me. They will call out as if they had been burned, and say frightful things about us up here, and our characters will be taken away—"

"Sir," put in Jacquet, "we should like to know where Mme. Jules was buried."

"Mme. Jules *who?* We have had three Jules this week. . . . Ah!" (interrupting himself as he glanced at the gate), "here comes Colonel de Maulincour's funeral, go out for the permit.—My word! it is a fine funeral," he added. "He has not been long about following his grandmother. Some families seem to drop off for a wager. They have such bad blood, have those Parisians!"

Jacquet tapped him on the arm.

"Sir, the person of whom I am speaking was Mme. Jules Desmarets, the stockbroker's wife."

"Oh, I know!" returned he, looking at Jacquet. "Thirteen mourning coaches at the funeral, weren't there? and only one relation apiece in the first dozen. It was so queer that we noticed it—"

"Take care, sir; M. Jules is with me, he might overhear you; and you ought not to talk like that."

"I beg your pardon, sir, you are right. Excuse me, I took you for the next-of-kin.—Mme. Jules is in the Rue du Maréchal Lefebvre, side walk Number 4," he continued, after consulting a plan of the ground; "she lies between Mlle. Raucourt of the Comédie Française and M. Moreau-Malvin, a butcher in a big way of business. There is a white marble

monument on order for him; it will be one of the finest things in the cemetery here, and that's a fact."

"We are no nearer, sir," Jacquet broke in.

"And that is true," said the other, looking round.

"Jean!" he called, as a man came in sight. "Show these gentlemen the way to Mme. Jules's grave, the stockbroker's wife. You know! Next to Mlle. Raucourt's, where there is a bust."

And the friends set out with their conductor; but before they reached the steep path which leads to the higher part of the cemetery, they must run the gantlet of a score or more of stonecutters, carvers, and makers of wrought-iron work, who came up to insinuate in honeyed accents, that "if monsieur would like to have something put up, we could do it for him very reasonably—"

Jacquet was glad enough to be there to stand between his friend and words intolerable for bleeding hearts. They reached the spot where she lay. At the sight of the rough sods and the row of pegs driven in by the laborers to mark out the space for the iron railings, Jules leaned upon Jacquet's shoulder, raising his head at intervals to give a long look at the little patch of clay where he must leave all that remained of her for whom and through whom he still lived.

"How hard for her to lie there!"

"But she is not there!" protested Jacquet; "she lives in your memory. Come away; let us leave this horrid place, where the dead are tricked out like women at a ball."

"How if we took her out of it?"

"Is it possible?"

"Anything is possible!" cried Jules. Then, after a pause, "So I shall come here some day; there is room for me."

Jacquet succeeded in getting him out of the inclosure. The tombs inclosed in those sprucely-kept chessboard compartments marked out by iron railings are covered with inscriptions and sculptured palms, and tears as cold as the marble on which survivors record their regrets and their coats-of-arms. You may read jests there, carved in black

letters, epigrams at the expense of the curious, pompous biographies, and ingeniously worded farewells. Here some one bides tryst, and, as usual in such cases, bides alone. Here you behold a thyrsus, there a lance-head railing; further on there are Egyptian vases and now and again cannon; while spangles, tinsel, and trash meet your eyes wherever you turn them. You see trade-signs in every direction. Every style—Moorish, Grecian, and Gothic—is represented, together with every variety of decoration—friezes, egg-moldings, paintings, urns, genii, and temples, among any quantity of dead rose-bushes and faded immortelles. It is a scandalous comedy! Here is Paris over again—streets, trade-signs, industries, houses and all complete; but it is a Paris seen through the wrong end of the perspective glass, a microscopic city, a Paris diminished to a shadow of itself, and shrunk to the measure of these chrysalides of the dead, this human species that has dwindled so much in everything save vanity.

Jules caught a glimpse of the view. At his feet, in the long valley of the Seine, between the low ridges of Vaugirard and Meudon, Belleville and Montmartre, lay the real Paris, in a blue haze of its own smoke, now sunlit and transparent. He glanced from under his eyelids over the forty thousand houses of the city, and waved his hand toward the space between the column of the Place Vendome and the cupola of the Invalides.

"There she was taken from me," he cried, "by the fatal curiosity of a world which seeks bustle and excitement for the sake of excitement and bustle."

Eight or nine miles further away down the Seine valley, in a little village on one of the lower slopes of those ridges of hill, between which the great restless city lies, like a child in its cradle, another sad death scene was taking place; but here there was none of the funeral pomp of Paris—there were no torches, no tall candle, no mourning coaches hung with black, no prayers of the Church; this was death reduced to

the bare fact. And this was the fact. A girl's body stranded that morning on the bank, among the reeds that grow in the Seine mud. Some dredgers on their way to work caught sight of it as they went up the river in their crazy boat.

"Hullo! fifty francs for us!" cried one.

"Right you are!" said the other.

They came close up to the dead body.

"She is a very fine girl."

"Let us go and give notice."

The two dredgers, covering the corpse with their jackets, went off to the mayor. That worthy was not a little puzzled to know how to draw up an official report of the discovery.

The rumor spread with the telegraphic speed peculiar to neighborhoods where communications are uninterrupted; the gossip on which the world battens, and scandal, tittle-tattle, and slander, rush in to fill the vacuum between any given points. In a very short time people came to the mayor's office to relieve that gentleman of any difficulty, and among them they converted the official report into an ordinary certificate of death. Through their assiduity the girl's body was identified; she was proved to be Mlle. Ida Gruget, stay-maker, of No. 14 Rue de la Corderie du Temple. At this stage of the proceedings the police intervened, and the Widow Gruget, the girl's mother, appeared with her daughter's farewell letter. While the mother sighed and groaned, a medical man ascertained that death had ensued from asphyxia and an access of venous blood to the pulmonary organs. That was all.

The inquest being over, and particulars filled in, the authorities gave permission for the burial of the body. The curé of the place declined to allow the procession to enter the church or to pray for the repose of the dead. So an old peasant woman sewed Ida Gruget in her shroud, she was laid in a rough coffin made of deal boards, and carried to the churchyard on four men's shoulders. Some few country women had the curiosity to follow, telling the story of the death with comments of pitying surprise. An old

lady charitably kept the widow, and would not allow her to join the sad little procession. A man, who fulfilled the threefold office of sexton, beadle, and bell-ringer, dug a grave in the churchyard, a half acre of ground at the back of the well-known church, a classical building with a square tower buttressed at the corners, and a slate-covered spire. The churchyard, bounded by crumbling walls, lies behind the round apse; there are no marble headstones there, and no visitors; but not one, surely, of all the mounds that furrow the space, lacked the tears and heartfelt regrets which no one gave to Ida Gruget. They put her down out of sight in a corner among the brambles and tall grasses; the bier was lowered into its place in that field so idyllic in its simplicity, and in another moment the gravedigger was left alone to fill in the grave in the gathering dusk. He stopped now and again to look over into the road below the wall; once, with his hand on his pickaxe, he gazed intently at the Seine which had brought this body for him to bury.

"Poor girl!" exclaimed a voice. Suddenly a man came up.

"How you startled me, sir!" said the sexton.

"Was there any service for this woman that you are burying?"

"No, sir. M. le Curé would not allow it. She is the first person buried here that is not of this parish. Everybody knows everybody else hereabout. Does monsieur—? Hullo! he is gone!"

Several days slipped by. A man in black came to the house in the Rue de Ménars; the stranger did not wish to speak to Jules; he went to Mme. Jules's room and left a large porphyry vase there, bearing the inscription:

INVITA LEGE,
CONJUGI MŒRENTI
FILIOLÆ CINERES
RESTITUIT
AMICIS XII JUVANTIBUS
MORIBUNDUS PATER.

"What a man!" exclaimed Jules, bursting into tears.

In one week Jules had carried out all his wife's wishes, and set his own affairs in order. He sold his professional connection to a brother of Martin Falleix's, and left Paris behind him, while the municipality was still debating whether or no a citizen had any legal claim to his wife's dead body.

Who has not met on the Paris boulevards, at a street corner, under the arcades of the Palais Royal—anywhere, in short, as chance may determine—some stranger, man or woman, whose face sets a host of confused thoughts springing up in his brain? It grows suddenly interesting at sight, perhaps because some personal singularity suggests a stormy life; perhaps gestures, gait, air, and costume all combine to present a curious whole; perhaps because a searching glance or an indescribable something makes a sudden, strong impression before you can explain the cause very clearly to yourself. On the morrow, other thoughts, other pictures of Paris life sweep away the passing dream. But if you happen to meet the same person again; if he is always passing along the street at the same hour (like a clerk at the registrar's office, for instance, whose presence is required at marriages eight hours daily); if he is one of those wandering mortals who seem to be a part of the furniture of the streets of Paris, and you see him again and again in public places, on first nights, or in those restaurants of which he is the fairest ornament—then that figure becomes a tenant in your memory, and stays there like an odd volume of a novel without a conclusion.

You are tempted to go up to the stranger and ask, "Who are you?—Why are you sauntering about the streets?—What right have you to wear a crumpled collar, a cane with an ivory knob, and a seedy waistcoat?—Why those blue spectacles with double glasses?" or "What makes you cling to that *muscadin's* cravat?"

Some among these errant creatures belong to the progeny

of Terminus, god of boundaries; they say nothing to your soul. There they are; that is all. Why are they there? Nobody knows. They are conventional signs, like the hackneyed figures used by sculptors to represent the Four Seasons, or Commerce, or Plenty. Others, again, retired attorneys, or shopkcepers, or antique generals, walk about, and always appear to be much the same. They never seem to be a part of the torrent of Paris, with its throng of young bustling men; rather, they remind you of half-uprooted trees by a riverside. It is impossible to say whether other people forgot to bury them, or whether they escaped out of their coffins. They have reached a semi-fossil condition.

One of these Paris Melmoths had come for several days past to make one of a sedate, self-contained little crowd which never fails to fill the space between the southern gate of the Luxembourg Gardens and the north gate of the Observatory, whenever the weather is bright. It is a place by itself, a neutral space in Paris. It lies out of the city, as it were, and yet the city is all about it. It partakes of the nature of a square, a thoroughfare, a boulevard, a fortification, a garden, an avenue, and a highway; it is provincial and Parisian; it is every one of these things, and not one of them; it is a desert. All about that nameless spot rise the walls of the Foundling Hospital, the Hôpital Cochin, the Capucins, La Bourbe, the Hospice de la Rochefoucauld, the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, and the hospital of the Val-de-Grace. All the sin and suffering of Paris, in fact, finds a refuge in its neighborhood; and that nothing may be wanting in so philanthropic a quarter, students of science repair thither to study the ebb and flow of the tides and latitude and longitude. M. de Chateaubriand too established the Infirmerie Marie Thérèse not very far away, and the Carmelites founded a convent near by. In that desert the sound of bells never ceases, every stroke represents one of the solemn moments in man's life; the mother in travail, the new-born babe, the dying laborer, the nun at prayer, perishing vice, shivering age, disappointed genius. Only a few

paces away lies the Cimetière du Mont Parnasse, whither shabby funerals go all day long from the crowded Faubourg Saint-Marceau.

Players at bowls have monopolized this esplanade with its view of Paris—gray-headed, homely, good-natured worthies are they, who continue the line of our ancestors, and can only be compared as to externals with their public, the moving gallery which follows them about. The man before alluded to as new to this deserted quarter was an assiduous spectator of the game, and certainly might be said to be the most striking figure in these groups; for if it is permissible to classify Parisians zoölogically, the other bystanders unmistakably belonged to the mollusk species. The new-comer would walk sympathetically with the jack, the small ball at which the others are aimed, the centre of interest in the game; and when it came to a stand, he would lean against a tree, and watch as a dog watches his master, while the bowls flew or rolled past. You might have taken him for the fantastic tutelar spirit of the jack. He never uttered a word. The players themselves, as zealous fanatics as could be found in any religious sect, had never taken him to task for his persistent silence, though some free-thinkers among them held that the man was deaf and dumb. Whenever there was occasion to measure the distance between the bowls and the jack, the stranger's cane was taken as the standard of measurement. The players used to take it from his ice-cold fingers without a word, or even a friendly nod. The loan of the cane was a kind of "easement" which he tacitly permitted. If a shower came on he stayed beside the jack —the slave of the bowls, the guardian of the unfinished game. He took rain and fine weather equally as a matter of course; like the players, he was a sort of intermediate species between the stupidest Parisian and the most intelligent of brutes. In other respects he was pale and withered-looking, absent-minded and careless of his dress. He often came without his hat. His square-shaped head and bald, sallow cranium showed through his white hair, like a beg-

gar's knee thrust through a hole in his breeches. He shambled uncertainly about with his mouth open; his vacant eyes were never turned to the sky, he never raised them indeed, and always seemed to be looking for something on the ground. At four o'clock an old woman would come for him and take him away somewhere or other, towing him after her as a girl tugs a capricious goat which insists on browsing when it is time to go back to the shed. It was something dreadful to see the old man.

It was afternoon. Jules, sitting alone in his travelling carriage, was driven lightly along the Rue de l'Est, and came out upon the Carrefour de l'Observatoire, just as the old man, leaning against a tree, allowed himself to be despoiled of his cane amid vociferous clamor of players, in pacific dispute over their game. Jules, fancying that he knew the face, called to the postilion to stop, and the carriage came to a stand there and then. As a matter of fact, the postilion, wedged in among heavy carts, was in nowise anxious to ask the insurgent players at bowls to allow him to pass; he had too much respect for *émeutes*, had that postilion.

"It is he!" Jules exclaimed, finally recognizing Ferragus XXIII., Chef des Dévorants, in that human wreck.—"How he loved her!" he added after a pause.—"Go on, postilion!" he shouted.

PARIS, *February, 1833.*

II

THE DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS

To Franz Liszt

IN A SPANISH CITY on an island in the Mediterranean there stands a convent of the Order of Barefoot Carmelites, where the rule instituted by St. Theresa is still preserved with all the first rigor of the reformation brought about by that illustrious woman. Extraordinary as this may seem, it is none the less true. Almost every religious house in the Peninsula, or in Europe for that matter, was either destroyed or disorganized by the outbreak of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars; but as this island was protected through those times by the English fleet, its wealthy convent and peaceable inhabitants were secure from the general trouble and spoliation. The storms of many kinds which shook the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century spent their force before they reached those cliffs at so short a distance from the coast of Andalusia.

If the rumor of the Emperor's name so much as reached the shore of the island, it is doubtful whether the holy women kneeling in the cloisters grasped the reality of his dream-like progress of glory, or the majesty that blazed in flame across kingdom after kingdom during his meteor life.

In the minds of the Roman Catholic world, the convent stood out pre-eminent for a stern discipline which nothing had changed; the purity of its rule had attracted unhappy women from the furthest parts of Europe, women deprived of all human ties, sighing after the long suicide accomplished in the breast of God. No convent, indeed, was so well fitted

for that complete detachment of the soul from all earthly things, which is demanded by the religious life, albeit on the continent of Europe there are many convents magnificently adapted to the purpose of their existence. Buried away in the loneliest valleys, hanging in mid-air on the steepest mountain sides, set down on the brink of precipices, in every place man has sought for the poetry of the Infinite, the solemn awe of Silence; in every place man has striven to draw closer to God, seeking Him on mountain peaks, in the depths below the crags, at the cliff's edge; and everywhere man has found God. But nowhere save on this half-European, half-African ledge of rock could you find so many different harmonies, combining so to raise the soul that the sharpest pain comes to be like other memories; the strongest impressions are dulled, till the sorrows of life are laid to rest in the depths.

The convent stands on the highest point of the crags at the uttermost end of the island. On the side toward the sea the rock was once rent sheer away in some globe-cataclysm; it rises up a straight wall from the base where the waves gnaw at the stone below high-water mark. Any assault is made impossible by the dangerous reefs that stretch far out to sea, with the sparkling waves of the Mediterranean playing over them. So, only from the sea can you discern the square mass of the convent built conformably to the minute rules laid down as to the shape, height, doors, and windows of monastic buildings. From the side of the town, the church completely hides the solid structure of the cloisters and their roofs, covered with broad slabs of stone impervious to sun or storm or gales of wind.

The church itself, built by the munificence of a Spanish family, is the crowning edifice of the town. Its fine, bold front gives an imposing and picturesque look to the little city in the sea. The sight of such a city, with its close-huddled roofs, arranged for the most part amphitheatre-wise above a picturesque harbor, and crowned by a glorious cathedral front with triple-arched Gothic doorways, belfry towers, and

filigree spires, is a spectacle surely in every way the sublimest on earth. Religion towering above daily life, to put men continually in mind of the End and the way, is in truth a thoroughly Spanish conception. But now surround this picture by the Mediterranean, and a burning sky, imagine a few palms here and there, a few stunted evergreen trees mingling their waving leaves with the motionless flowers and foliage of carved stone; look out over the reef with its white fringes of foam in contrast to the sapphire sea; and then turn to the city, with its galleries and terraces whither the townsfolk come to take the air among their flowers of an evening, above the houses and the tops of the trees in their little gardens; add a few sails down in the harbor; and lastly, in the stillness of falling night, listen to the organ music, the chanting of the services, the wonderful sound of bells pealing out over the open sea. There is sound and silence everywhere; oftener still there is silence over all.

The church is divided within into a sombre, mysterious nave and narrow aisles. For some reason, probably because the winds are so high, the architect was unable to build the flying buttresses and intervening chapels which adorn almost all cathedrals, nor are there openings of any kind in the walls which support the weight of the roof. Outside there is simply the heavy wall structure, a solid mass of gray stone further strengthened by huge piers placed at intervals. Inside, the nave and its little side galleries are lighted entirely by the great stained-glass rose-window suspended by a miracle of art above the centre doorway; for upon that side the exposure permits of the display of lacework in stone and of other beauties peculiar to the style improperly called Gothic.

The larger part of the nave and aisles was left for the townsfolk, who came and went and heard mass there. The choir was shut off from the rest of the church by a grating and thick folds of brown curtain, left slightly apart in the middle in such a way that nothing of the choir could be seen from the church except the high altar and the officiating priest. The grating itself was divided up by the pillars

which supported the organ loft; and this part of the structure, with its carved wooden columns, completed the line of the arcading in the gallery carried by the shafts in the nave. If any inquisitive person, therefore, had been bold enough to climb upon the narrow balustrade in the gallery to look down into the choir, he could have seen nothing but the tall eight-sided windows of stained glass beyond the high altar.

At the time of the French expedition into Spain to establish Ferdinand VII. once more on the throne, a French general came to the island after the taking of Cadiz, ostensibly to require the recognition of the King's government, really to see the convent and to find some means of entering it. The undertaking was certainly a delicate one; but a man of passionate temper, whose life had been, as it were, but one series of poems in action, a man who all his life long had lived romances instead of writing them, a man pre-eminently a Doer, was sure to be tempted by a deed which seemed to be impossible.

To open the doors of a convent of nuns by lawful means! The metropolitan or the Pope would scarcely have permitted it! And as for force or stratagem—might not any indiscretion cost him his position, his whole career as a soldier, and the end in view to boot? The Duc d'Angouleme was still in Spain; and of all the crimes which a man in favor with the Commander-in-Chief might commit, this one alone was certain to find him inexorable. The General had asked for the mission to gratify private motives of curiosity, though never was curiosity more hopeless. This final attempt was a matter of conscience. The Carmelite convent on the island was the only nunnery in Spain which had baffled his search.

As he crossed from the mainland, scarcely an hour's distance, he felt a presentiment that his hopes were to be fulfilled; and afterward, when as yet he had seen nothing of the convent but its walls, and of the nuns not so much as their robes; while he had merely heard the chanting of the service, there were dim auguries under the walls and in the sound of the voices to justify his frail hope. And, indeed,

however faint those so unaccountable presentiments might be, never was human passion more vehemently excited than the General's curiosity at that moment. There are no small events for the heart; the heart exaggerates everything; the heart weighs the fall of a fourteen-year-old Empire and the dropping of a woman's glove in the same scales, and the glove is nearly always the heavier of the two. So here are the facts in all their prosaic simplicity. The facts first, the emotions will follow.

An hour after the General landed on the island, the royal authority was re-established there. Some few Constitutional Spaniards who had found their way thither after the fall of Cadiz were allowed to charter a vessel and sail for London. So there was neither resistance nor reaction. But the change of government could not be effected in the little town without a mass, at which the two divisions under the General's command were obliged to be present. Now, it was upon this mass that the General had built his hopes of gaining some information as to the sisters in the convent; he was quite unaware how absolutely the Carmelites were cut off from the world; but he knew that there might be among them one whom he held dearer than life, dearer than honor.

His hopes were cruelly dashed at once. Mass, it is true, was celebrated in state. In honor of such a solemnity, the curtains which always hid the choir were drawn back to display its riches, its valuable paintings and shrines so bright with gems that they eclipsed the glories of the ex-votos of gold and silver hung up by sailors of the port on the columns in the nave. But all the nuns had taken refuge in the organ-loft. And yet, in spite of this first check, during this very mass of thanksgiving, the most intimately thrilling drama that ever set a man's heart beating opened out widely before him.

The sister who played the organ aroused such intense enthusiasm that not a single man regretted that he had come to the service. Even the men in the ranks were delighted, and the officers were in ecstasy. As for the General, he was

seemingly calm and indifferent. The sensations stirred in him as the sister played one piece after another belong to the small number of things which it is not lawful to utter; words are powerless to express them; like Death, God, Eternity, they can only be realized through their one point of contact with humanity. Strangely enough, the organ music seemed to belong to the school of Rossini, the musician who brings most human passion into his art. Some day his works, by their number and extent, will receive the reverence due to the Homer of music. From among all the scores that we owe to his great genius, the nun seemed to have chosen "Moses in Egypt" for special study, doubtless because the spirit of sacred music finds therein its supreme expression. Perhaps the soul of the great musician, so gloriously known to Europe, and the soul of this unknown executant had met in the intuitive apprehension of the same poetry. So at least thought two dilettanti officers who must have missed the Théatre Favart in Spain.

At last in the "Te Deum" no one could fail to discern a French soul in the sudden change that came over the music. Joy for the victory of the Most Christian King evidently stirred this nun's heart to the depths. She was a Frenchwoman beyond mistake. Soon the love of country shone out, breaking forth like shafts of light from the fugue, as the sister introduced variations with all a Parisienne's fastidious taste, and blended vague suggestions of our grandest national airs with her music. A Spaniard's fingers would not have brought this warmth into a graceful tribute paid to the victorious arms of France. The musician's nationality was revealed.

"We find France everywhere, it seems," said one of the men.

The General had left the church during the "Te Deum"; he could not listen any longer. The nun's music had been a revelation of a woman loved to frenzy; a woman so carefully hidden from the world's eyes, so deeply buried in the bosom of the Church, that hitherto the most ingenious and

persistent efforts made by men who brought great influence and unusual powers to bear upon the search had failed to find her. The suspicion aroused in the General's heart became all but a certainty with the vague reminiscence of a sad, delicious melody, the air of "Fleuve du Tage." The woman he loved had played the prelude to the ballad in a boudoir in Paris, how often! and now this nun had chosen the song to express an exile's longing, amid the joy of those that triumphed. Terrible sensation! To hope for the resurrection of a lost love, to find her only to know that she was lost, to catch a mysterious glimpse of her after five years—five years, in which the pent-up passion, chafing in an empty life, had grown the mightier for every fruitless effort to satisfy it!

Who has not known, at least once in his life, what it is to lose some precious thing; and after hunting through his papers, ransacking his memory, and turning his house upside down; after one or two days spent in vain search, and hope, and despair; after a prodigious expenditure of the liveliest irritation of soul, who has not known the ineffable pleasure of finding that all-important nothing which had come to be a kind of monomania? Very good. Now, spread that fury of search over five years; put a woman, put a heart, put Love in the place of the trifle; transpose the monomania into the key of high passion; and, furthermore, let the seeker be a man of ardent temper, with a lion's heart and a leonine head and mane, a man to inspire awe and fear in those who come in contact with him—realize this, and you may, perhaps, understand why the General walked abruptly out of the church when the first notes of a ballad, which he used to hear with a rapture of delight in a gilt-panelled boudoir, began to vibrate along the aisles of the church in the sea.

The General walked away down the steep street which led to the port, and only stopped when he could not hear the deep notes of the organ. Unable to think of anything but the love which broke out in volcanic eruption, filling

his heart with fire, he only knew that the "Te Deum" was over when the Spanish congregation came pouring out of the church. Feeling that his behavior and attitude might seem ridiculous, he went back to head the procession, telling the alcalde and the governor that, feeling suddenly faint, he had gone out into the air. Casting about for a plea for prolonging his stay, it at once occurred to him to make the most of this excuse, framed on the spur of the moment. He declined, on a plea of increasing indisposition, to preside at the banquet given by the town to the French officers, betook himself to his bed, and sent a message to the Major-General, to the effect that temporary illness obliged him to leave the Colonel in command of the troops for the time being. This commonplace but very plausible stratagem relieved him of all responsibility for the time necessary to carry out his plans. The General, nothing if not "catholic and monarchical," took occasion to inform himself of the hours of the services, and manifested the greatest zeal for the performance of his religious duties, piety which caused no remark in Spain.

The very next day, while the division was marching out of the town, the General went to the convent to be present at vespers. He found an empty church. The townsfolk, devout though they were, had all gone down to the quay to watch the embarkation of the troops. He felt glad to be the only man there. He tramped noisily up the nave, clanking his spurs till the vaulted roof rang with the sound; he coughed, he talked aloud to himself to let the nuns know, and more particularly to let the organist know, that if the troops were gone, one Frenchman was left behind. Was this singular warning heard and understood? He thought so. It seemed to him that in the "Magnificat" the organ made response which was borne to him on the vibrating air. The nun's spirit found wings in music and fled toward him, throbbing with the rhythmical pulse of the sounds. Then, in all its might, the music burst forth and filled the church with warmth. The Song of Joy set apart in the sublime liturgy of Latin Christianity to express the exaltation of

the soul in the presence of the glory of the Ever-living God, became the utterance of a heart almost terrified by its gladness in the presence of the glory of a mortal love; a love that yet lived, a love that had risen to trouble her even beyond the grave in which the nun is laid, that she may rise again as the bride of Christ.

The organ is in truth the grandest, the most daring, the most magnificent of all instruments invented by human genius. It is a whole orchestra in itself. It can express anything in response to a skilled touch. Surely it is in some sort a pedestal on which the soul poises for a flight forth into space, essaying on her course to draw picture after picture in an endless series, to paint human life, to cross the Infinite that separates heaven from earth? And the longer a dreamer listens to those giant harmonies, the better he realizes that nothing save this hundred-voiced choir on earth can fill all the space between kneeling men, and a God hidden by the blinding light of the Sanctuary. The music is the one interpreter strong enough to bear up the prayers of humanity to heaven, prayer in its omnipotent moods, prayer tinged by the melancholy of many different natures, colored by meditative ecstasy, upspringing with the impulse of repentance—blended with the myriad fancies of every creed. Yes. In those long vaulted aisles the melodies inspired by the sense of things divine are blent with a grandeur unknown before, are decked with new glory and might. Out of the dim daylight, and the deep silence broken by the chanting of the choir in response to the thunder of the organ, a veil is woven for God, and the brightness of His attributes shines through it.

And this wealth of holy things seemed to be flung down like a grain of incense upon the fragile altar raised to Love beneath the eternal throne of a jealous and avenging God. Indeed, in the joy of the nun there was little of that awe and gravity which should harmonize with the solemnities of the "Magnificat." She had enriched the music with graceful variations, earthly gladness throbbing through the rhythm

of each. In such brilliant quivering notes some great singer might strive to find a voice for her love, her melodies fluttered as a bird flutters about her mate. There were moments when she seemed to leap back into the past, to dally there, now with laughter, now with tears. Her changing moods, as it were, ran riot. She was like a woman excited and happy over her lover's return.

But at length, after the swaying fugues of delirium, after the marvellous rendering of a vision of the past, a revulsion swept over the soul that thus found utterance for itself. With a swift transition from the major to the minor, the organist told her hearer of her present lot. She gave the story of long melancholy broodings, of the slow course of her moral malady. How day by day she deadened the senses, how every night cut off one more thought, how her heart was slowly reduced to ashes. The sadness deepened shade after shade through languid modulations, and in a little while the echoes were pouring out a torrent of grief. Then on a sudden, high notes rang out like the voices of angels singing together, as if to tell the lost but not forgotten lover that their spirits now could only meet in heaven. Pathetic hope! Then followed the *Amen*. No more joy, no more tears in the air, no sadness, no regrets. The *Amen* was the return to God. The final chord was deep, solemn, even terrible; for the last rumblings of the bass sent a shiver through the audience that raised the hair on their heads; the nun shook out her veiling of crape, and seemed to sink again into the grave from which she had risen for a moment. Slowly the reverberations died away; it seemed as if the church, but now so full of light, had returned to thick darkness.

The General had been caught up and borne swiftly away by this strong-winged spirit; he had followed the course of its flight from beginning to end. He understood to the fullest extent the imagery of that burning symphony; for him the chords reached deep and far. For him, as for the sister, the poem meant future, present, and past. Is not music, and

even opera music, a sort of text which a susceptible or poetic temper, or a sore and stricken heart, may expand as memories shall determine? If a musician must needs have the heart of a poet, must not the listener too be in a manner a poet and a lover to hear all that lies in great music? Religion, love, and music—what are they but a threefold expression of the same fact, of that craving for expansion which stirs in every noble soul? And these three forms of poetry ascend to God, in whom all passion on earth finds its end. Wherefore the holy human trinity finds a place amid the infinite glories of God; of God, whom we always represent surrounded with the fires of love and seistrons of gold—music and light and harmony. Is not He the Cause and the End of all our strivings?

The French General guessed rightly that here in the desert, on this bare rock in the sea, the nun had seized upon music as an outpouring of the passion that still consumed her. Was this her manner of offering up her love as a sacrifice to God? Or was it Love exultant in triumph over God? The questions were hard to answer. But one thing at least the General could not mistake—in this heart, dead to the world, the fire of passion burned as fiercely as in his own.

Vespers over, he went back to the alcalde with whom he was staying. In the all-absorbing joy which comes in such full measure when a satisfaction sought long and painfully is attained at last, he could see nothing beyond this—he was still loved! In her heart love had grown in loneliness, even as his love had grown stronger as he surmounted one barrier after another which this woman had set between them! The glow of soul came to its natural end. There followed a longing to see her again, to contend with God for her, to snatch her away—a rash scheme, which appealed to a daring nature. He went to bed, when the meal was over, to avoid questions; to be alone and think at his ease; and he lay absorbed by deep thought till day broke.

He rose only to go to mass. He went to the church and knelt close to the screen, with his forehead touching the cur-

tain; he would have torn a hole in it if he had been alone, but his host had come with him out of politeness, and the least imprudence might compromise the whole future of his love, and ruin the new hopes.

The organ sounded, but it was another player, and not the nun of the last two days whose hands touched the keys. It was all colorless and cold for the General. Was the woman he loved prostrated by emotion which wellnigh overcame a strong man's heart? Had she so fully realized and shared an unchanged, longed-for love, that now she lay dying on her bed in her cell? While innumerable thoughts of this kind perplexed his mind, the voice of the woman he worshipped rang out close beside him; he knew its clear resonant soprano. It was her voice, with that faint tremor in it which gave it all the charm that shyness and diffidence gives to a young girl; her voice, distinct from the mass of singing as a *prima donna's* in the chorus of a finale. It was like a golden or silver thread in dark frieze.

It was she! There could be no mistake. Parisienne now as ever, she had not laid coquetry aside when she threw off worldly adornments for the veil and the Carmelite's coarse serge. She who had affirmed her love last evening in the praise sent up to God, seemed now to say to her lover, "Yes, it is I. I am here. My love is unchanged, but I am beyond the reach of love. You will hear my voice, my soul shall enfold you, and I shall abide here under the brown shroud in the choir from which no power on earth can tear me. You shall never see me more!"

"It is she indeed!" the General said to himself, raising his head. He had leaned his face on his hands, unable at first to bear the intolerable emotion that surged like a whirlpool in his heart, when that well-known voice vibrated under the arcading, with the sound of the sea for accompaniment.

Storm was without, and calm within the sanctuary. Still that rich voice poured out all its caressing notes; it fell like balm on the lover's burning heart; it blossomed upon the air —the air that a man would fain breathe more deeply to receive

the effluence of a soul breathed forth with love in the words of the prayer. The alcalde coming to join his guest found him in tears during the elevation, while the nun was singing, and brought him back to his house. Surprised to find so much piety in a French military man, the worthy magistrate invited the confessor of the convent to meet his guest. Never had news given the General more pleasure; he paid the ecclesiastic a good deal of attention at supper, and confirmed his Spanish hosts in the high opinion they had formed of his piety by a not wholly disinterested respect. He inquired with gravity how many sisters there were in the convent, and asked for particulars of its endowment and revenues, as if from courtesy he wished to hear the good priest discourse on the subject most interesting to him. He informed himself as to the manner of life led by the holy women. Were they allowed to go out of the convent, or to see visitors?

"Señor," replied the venerable churchman, "the rule is strict. A woman cannot enter a monastery of the order of St. Bruno without a special permission from His Holiness, and the rule here is equally stringent. No man may enter a convent of Barefoot Carmelites unless he is a priest specially attached to the services of the house by the Archbishop. None of the nuns may leave the convent; though the great Saint, St. Theresa, often left her cell. The Visitor or the Mothers Superior can alone give permission, subject to an authorization from the Archbishop, for a nun to see a visitor, and then especially in a case of illness. Now we are one of the principal houses, and consequently we have a Mother Superior here. Among other foreign sisters there is one Frenchwoman, Sister Theresa; she it is who directs the music in the chapel."

"Oh!" said the General, with feigned surprise. "She must have rejoiced over the victory of the House of Bourbon."

"I told them the reason of the mass; they are always a little bit inquisitive."

"But Sister Theresa may have interests in France. Per-

haps she would like to send some message or to hear news."

"I do not think so. She would have come to ask me."

"As a fellow-countryman, I should be quite curious to see her," said the General. "If it is possible, if the Lady Superior consents, if—"

"Even at the grating and in the Reverend Mother's presence, an interview would be quite impossible for anybody whatsoever; but, strict as the Mother is, for a deliverer of our holy religion and the throne of his Catholic Majesty, the rule might be relaxed for a moment," said the confessor, blinking. "I will speak about it."

"How old is Sister Theresa?" inquired the lover. He dared not ask any questions of the priest as to the nun's beauty.

"She does not reckon years now," the good man answered, with a simplicity that made the General shudder.

Next day before siesta, the confessor came to inform the French General that Sister Theresa and the Mother consented to receive him at the grating in the parlor before vespers. The General spent the siesta in pacing to and fro along the quay in the noonday heat. Thither the priest came to find him, and brought him to the convent by way of the gallery round the cemetery. Fountains, green trees, and rows of arcading maintained a cool freshness in keeping with the place.

At the further end of the long gallery the priest led the way into a large room divided in two by a grating covered with a brown curtain. In the first, and in some sort public half of the apartment, where the confessor left the new-comer, a wooden bench ran round the wall, and two or three chairs, also of wood, were placed near the grating. The ceiling consisted of bare unornamented joists and cross-beams of ilex wood. As the two windows were both on the inner side of the grating, and the dark surface of the wood was a bad reflector, the light in the place was so dim that you could scarcely see the great black crucifix, the portrait of Saint

Theresa, and a picture of the Madonna which adorned the gray parlor walls. Tumultuous as the General's feelings were, they took something of the melancholy of the place. He grew calm in that homely quiet. A sense of something vast as the tomb took possession of him beneath the chill unceiled roof. Here, as in the grave, was there not eternal silence, deep peace—the sense of the Infinite? And besides this there was the quiet and the fixed thought of the cloister —a thought which you felt like a subtle presence in the air, and in the dim dusk of the room; an all-pervasive thought nowhere definitely expressed, and looming the larger in the imagination; for in the cloister the great saying, "Peace in the Lord," enters the least religious soul as a living force.

The monk's life is scarcely comprehensible. A man seems confessed a weakling in a monastery; he was born to act, to live out a life of work; he is evading a man's destiny in his cell. But what man's strength, blended with pathetic weakness, is implied by a woman's choice of the convent life! A man may have any number of motives for burying himself in a monastery; for him it is the leap over the precipice. A woman has but one motive—she is a woman still; she betroths herself to a Heavenly Bridegroom. Of the monk you may ask, "Why did you not fight your battle?" But if a woman immures herself in the cloister, is there not always a sublime battle fought first?

At length it seemed to the General that that still room, and the lonely convent in the sea, were full of thoughts of him. Love seldom attains to solemnity; yet surely a love still faithful in the breast of God was something solemn, something more than a man had a right to look for as things are in this nineteenth century? The infinite grandeur of the situation might well produce an effect upon the General's mind; he had precisely enough elevation of soul to forget politics, honors, Spain, and society in Paris, and to rise to the height of this lofty climax. And what in truth could be more tragic? How much must pass in the souls of these

two lovers, brought together in a place of strangers, on a ledge of granite in the sea; yet held apart by an intangible, unsurmountable barrier! Try to imagine the man saying within himself, "Shall I triumph over God in her heart?" when a faint rustling sound made him quiver, and the curtain was drawn aside.

Between him and the light stood a woman. Her face was hidden by the veil that drooped from the folds upon her head; she was dressed according to the rule of the order in a gown of the color become proverbial. Her bare feet were hidden; if the General could have seen them, he would have known how appallingly thin she had grown; and yet in spite of the thick folds of her coarse gown, a mere covering and no ornament, he could guess how tears, and prayer, and passion, and loneliness had wasted the woman before him.

An ice-cold hand, belonging, no doubt, to the Mother Superior, held back the curtain. The General gave the enforced witness of their interview a searching glance, and met the dark, inscrutable gaze of an aged recluse. The Mother might have been a century old, but the bright, youthful eyes belied the wrinkles that furrowed her pale face.

"Mme. la Duchesse," he began, his voice shaken with emotion, "does your companion understand French?" The veiled figure bowed her head at the sound of his voice.

"There is no duchess here," she replied. "It is Sister Theresa whom you see before you. She whom you call my companion is my mother in God, my superior here on earth."

The words were so meekly spoken by the voice that sounded in other years amid harmonious surroundings of refined luxury, the voice of a queen of fashion in Paris. Such words from the lips that once spoke so lightly and flippantly struck the General dumb with amazement.

"The Holy Mother only speaks Latin and Spanish," she added.

"I understand neither. Dear Antoinette, make my excuses to her."

The light fell full upon the nun's figure; a thrill of deep emotion betrayed itself in a faint quiver of her veil as she heard her name softly spoken by the man who had been so hard in the past.

"My brother," she said, drawing her sleeve under her veil, perhaps to brush tears away, "I am Sister Theresa."

Then, turning to the Superior, she spoke in Spanish; the General knew enough of the language to understand what she said perfectly well; possibly he could have spoken it had he chosen to do so.

"Dear Mother, the gentleman presents his respects to you, and begs you to pardon him if he cannot pay them himself, but he knows neither of the languages which you speak—"

The aged nun bent her head slowly, with an expression of angelic sweetness, enhanced at the same time by the consciousness of her power and dignity.

"Do you know this gentleman?" she asked, with a keen glance.

"Yes, Mother."

"Go back to your cell, my daughter!" said the Mother imperiously.

The General slipped aside behind the curtain lest the dreadful tumult within him should appear in his face; even in the shadow it seemed to him that he could still see the Superior's piercing eyes. He was afraid of her; she held his little, frail, hardly-won happiness in her hands; and he, who had never quailed under a triple row of guns, now trembled before this nun. The Duchess went toward the door, but she turned back.

"Mother," she said, with dreadful calmness, "the Frenchman is one of my brothers."

"Then stay, my daughter," said the Superior, after a pause.

The piece of admirable Jesuitry told of such love and

regret, that a man less strongly constituted might have broken down under the keen delight in the midst of a great and, for him, an entirely novel peril. Oh! how precious words, looks, and gestures became when love must baffle lynx eyes and tiger's claws! Sister Theresa came back.

"You see, my brother, what I have dared to do only to speak to you for a moment of your salvation and of the prayers that my soul puts up for your soul daily. I am committing mortal sin. I have told a lie. How many days of penance must expiate that lie! But I shall endure it for your sake. My brother, you do not know what happiness it is to love in heaven; to feel that you can confess love purified by religion, love transported into the highest heights of all, so that we are permitted to lose sight of all but the soul. If the doctrine and the spirit of the Saint to whom we owe this refuge had not raised me above earth's anguish, and caught me up and set me, far indeed beneath the Sphere wherein she dwells, yet truly above this world, I should not have seen you again. But now I can see you, and hear your voice, and remain calm—"

The General broke in, "But, Antoinette, let me see you, you whom I love passionately, desperately, as you could have wished me to love you."

"Do not call me Antoinette, I implore you. Memories of the past hurt me. You must see no one here but Sister Theresa, a creature who trusts in the Divine mercy." She paused for a little, and then added, "You must control yourself, my brother. Our Mother would separate us without pity if there is any worldly passion in your face, or if you allow the tears to fall from your eyes."

The General bowed his head to regain self-control; when he looked up again he saw her face beyond the grating—the thin, white, but still impassioned face of the nun. All the magic charm of youth that once bloomed there, all the fair contrast of velvet whiteness and the

color of the Bengal rose, had given place to a burning glow, as of a porcelain jar with a faint light shining through it. The wonderful hair in which she took such pride had been shaven; there was a bandage round her forehead and about her face. An ascetic life had left dark traces about the eyes, which still sometimes shot out fevered glances; their ordinary calm expression was but a veil. In a few words, she was but the ghost of her former self.

"Ah! you that have come to be my life, you must come out of this tomb! You were mine; you had no right to give yourself, even to God. Did you not promise me to give up all at the least command from me? You may perhaps think me worthy of that promise now when you hear what I have done for you. I have sought you all through the world. You have been in my thoughts at every moment for five years; my life has been given to you. My friends, very powerful friends, as you know, have helped with all their might to search every convent in France, Italy, Spain, Sicily, and America. Love burned more brightly for every vain search. Again and again I made long journeys with a false hope; I have wasted my life and the heaviest throbbings of my heart in vain under many a dark convent wall. I am not speaking of a faithfulness that knows no bounds, for what is it?—nothing compared with the infinite longings of my love. If your remorse long ago was sincere, you ought not to hesitate to follow me to-day."

"You forget that I am not free."

"The Duke is dead," he answered quickly.

Sister Theresa flushed red.

"May heaven be open to him!" she cried with a quick rush of feeling. "He was generous to me.—But I did not mean such ties; it was one of my sins that I was ready to break them all without scruple—for you."

"Are you speaking of your vows?" the General asked, frowning. "I did not think that anything weighed heavier with your heart than love. But do not think twice of it,

Antoinette; the Holy Father himself shall absolve you of your oath. I will surely go to Rome, I will entreat all the powers of earth; if God could come down from heaven, I would—"

"Do not blaspheme."

"So do not fear the anger of God. Ah! I would far rather hear that you would leave your prison for me; that this very night you would let yourself down into a boat at the foot of the cliffs. And we would go away to be happy somewhere at the world's end, I know not where. And with me at your side, you should come back to life and health under the wings of love."

"You must not talk like this," said Sister Theresa; "you do not know what you are to me now. I love you far better than I ever loved you before. Every day I pray for you; I see you with other eyes. Armand, if you but knew the happiness of giving yourself up, without shame, to a pure friendship which God watches over! You do not know what joy it is to me to pray for heaven's blessing on you. I never pray for myself: God will do with me according to His will; but, at the price of my soul, I wish I could be sure that you are happy here on earth, and that you will be happy hereafter throughout all ages. My eternal life is all that trouble has left me to offer up to you. I am old now with weeping; I am neither young nor fair; and in any case, you could not respect the nun who became a wife; no love, not even motherhood, could give me absolution. . . . What can you say to outweigh the uncounted thoughts that have gathered in my heart during the past five years, thoughts that have changed, and worn, and blighted it? I ought to have given a heart less sorrowful to God."

"What can I say? Dear Antoinette, I will say this, that I love you; that affection, love, a great love, the joy of living in another heart that is ours, utterly and wholly ours, is so rare a thing and so hard to find, that I doubted you, and put you to sharp proof; but now, to-day, I love you, Antoinette, with all my soul's strength. . . . If you will follow

me into solitude, I will hear no voice but yours, I will see no other face."

"Hush, Armand! You are shortening the little time that we may be together here on earth."

"Antoinette, will you come with me?"

"I am never away from you. My life is in your heart, not through the selfish ties of earthly happiness, or vanity, or enjoyment; pale and withered as I am, I live here for you, in the breast of God. As God is just, you shall be happy—"

"Words, words all of it! Pale and withered? How if I want you? How if I cannot be happy without you? Do you still think of nothing but duty with your lover before you? Is he never to come first and above all things else in your heart? In time past you put social success, yourself, heaven knows what, before him; now it is God, it is the welfare of my soul! In Sister Theresa I find the Duchess over again, ignorant of the happiness of love, insensible as ever, beneath the semblance of sensibility. You do not love me; you have never loved me—"

"Oh, my brother—!"

"You do not wish to leave this tomb. You love my soul, do you say? Very well, through you it will be lost forever. I shall make away with myself—"

"Mother!" Sister Theresa called aloud in Spanish, "I have lied to you; this man is my lover!"

The curtain fell at once. The General, in his stupor, scarcely heard the doors within as they clanged.

"Ah! she loves me still!" he cried, understanding all the sublimity of that cry of hers. "She loves me still. She must be carried off. . . ."

The General left the island, returned to headquarters, pleaded ill-health, asked for leave of absence, and forthwith took his departure for France.

And now for the incidents which brought the two personages in this "Scene" into their present relation to each other.

The thing known in France as the Faubourg Saint-Germain is neither a Quarter, nor a sect, nor an institution, nor anything else that admits of a precise definition. There are great houses in the Place Royale, the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and the Chaussée d'Antin, in any one of which you may breathe the same atmosphere of Faubourg Saint-Germain. So, to begin with, the whole Faubourg is not within the Faubourg. There are men and women born far enough away from its influences who respond to them and take their place in the circle; and again there are others, born within its limits, who may yet be driven forth forever. For the last forty years the manners, and customs, and speech, in a word, the tradition of the Faubourg Saint Germain, has been to Paris what the Court used to be in other times; it is what the Hotel Saint-Paul was to the Fourteenth Century; the Louvre to the Fifteenth; the Palais, the Hotel Rambouillet, and the Place Royale to the Sixteenth; and lastly, as Versailles was to the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth.

Just as the ordinary work-a-day Paris will always centre about some point, so, through all periods of history, the Paris of the nobles and the upper classes converges toward some particular spot. It is a periodically recurrent phenomenon which presents ample matter for reflection to those who are fain to observe or describe the various social zones; and possibly an inquiry into the causes that bring about this centralization may do more than merely justify the probability of this episode; it may be of service to serious interests which some day will be more deeply rooted to the commonwealth, unless, indeed, experience is as meaningless for political parties as it is for youth.

In every age the great nobles, and the rich who always ape the great nobles, build their houses as far as possible from the crowded streets. When the Duc d'Uzés built his splendid hotel in the Rue Montmartre in the reign of Louis XIV., and set the fountain at his gates—for which beneficent action, to say nothing of his other virtues, he was held in

such veneration that the whole quarter turned out in a body to follow his funeral—when the Duke, I say, chose this site for his house, he did so because that part of Paris was almost deserted in those days. But when the fortifications were pulled down, and the market gardens beyond the line of the boulevards began to fill with houses, then the d'Uzés family left their fine mansion, and in our time it was occupied by a banker. Later still, the noblesse began to find themselves out of their element among shopkeepers, left the Place Royale and the centre of Paris for good, and crossed the river to breathe freely in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where palaces were reared already about the great hotel built by Louis XIV. for the Duc de Maine—the Benjamin among his legitimated offspring. And indeed, for people accustomed to a stately life, can there be more unseemly surroundings than the bustle, the mud, the street cries, the bad smells, and narrow thoroughfares of a populous quarter? The very habits of life in a mercantile or manufacturing district are completely at variance with the lives of nobles. The shopkeeper and artisan are just going to bed when the great world is thinking of dinner; and the noisy stir of life begins among the former when the latter have gone to rest. Their day's calculations never coincide; the one class represents the expenditure, the other the receipts. Consequently their manners and customs are diametrically opposed.

Nothing contemptuous is intended by this statement. An aristocracy is in a manner the intellect of the social system, as the middle classes and the proletariat may be said to be its organizing and working power. It naturally follows that these forces are differently situated; and of their antagonism there is bred a seeming antipathy produced by the performance of different functions, all of them, however, existing for one common end.

Such social dissonances are so inevitably the outcome of any charter of the constitution, that however much a Liberal may be disposed to complain of them, as of treason against those sublime ideas with which the ambitious plebeian is

apt to cover his designs, he would none the less think it a preposterous notion that M. le Prince de Montmorency, for instance, should continue to live in the Rue Saint-Martin at the corner of the street which bears that nobleman's name; or that M. le Duc de Fitz-James, descendant of the royal house of Scotland, should have his hotel at the angle of the Rue Marie Stuart and the Rue Montorgueil. *Sint ut sunt, aut non sint*, the grand words of the Jesuit, might be taken as a motto by the great in all countries. These social differences are patent in all ages; the fact is always accepted by the people; its "reasons of state" are self-evident; it is at once cause and effect, a principle and a law. The common-sense of the masses never deserts them until demagogues stir them up to gain ends of their own; that common-sense is based on the verities of social order; and the social order is the same everywhere, in Moscow as in London, in Geneva as in Calcutta. Given a certain number of families of unequal fortune in any given space, you will see an aristocracy forming under your eyes; there will be the patricians, the upper classes, and yet other ranks below them. Equality may be a *right*, but no power on earth can convert it into *fact*. It would be a good thing for France if this idea could be popularized. The benefits of political harmony are obvious to the least intelligent classes. Harmony is, as it were, the poetry of order, and order is a matter of vital importance to the working population. And what is order, reduced to its simplest expression, but the agreement of things among themselves—unity, in short? Architecture, music, and poetry, everything in France, and in France more than in any other country, is based upon this principle; it is written upon the very foundations of her clear accurate language, and a language must always be the most infallible index of national character. In the same way you may note that the French popular airs are those most calculated to strike the imagination, the best-modulated melodies are taken over by the people; clearness of thought, the intellectual simplicity of an idea attracts them; they like the incisive sayings that hold

the greatest number of ideas. France is the one country in the world where a little phrase may bring about a great revolution. Whenever the masses have risen, it has been to bring men, affairs, and principles into agreement. No nation has a clearer conception of that idea of unity which should permeate the life of an aristocracy; possibly no other nation has so intelligent a comprehension of a political necessity; history will never find her behind the time. France has been led astray many a time, but she is deluded, woman-like, by generous ideas, by a glow of enthusiasm which at first outstrips sober reason.

So, to begin with, the most striking characteristic of the Faubourg is the splendor of its great mansions, its great gardens, and a surrounding quiet in keeping with princely revenues drawn from great estates. And what is this distance set between a class and a whole metropolis but the visible and outward expression of the widely different attitude of mind which must inevitably keep them apart? The position of the head is well defined in every organism. If by any chance a nation allows its head to fall at its feet, it is pretty sure sooner or later to discover that this is a suicidal measure; and since nations have no desire to perish, they set to work at once to grow a new head. If they lack the strength for this, they perish as Rome perished, and Venice, and so many other states.

This distinction between the upper and lower spheres of social activity, emphasized by differences in their manner of living, necessarily implies that in the highest aristocracy there is real worth and some distinguishing merit. In any State, no matter what form of "government" is affected, so soon as the patrician class fails to maintain that complete superiority which is the condition of its existence, it ceases to be a force, and is pulled down at once by the populace. The people always wish to see money, power, and initiative in their leaders, hands, hearts, and heads; they must be the spokesmen, they must represent the intelligence and the glory of the nation. Nations, like women, love strength in those

who rule them; they cannot give love without respect; they refuse utterly to obey those of whom they do not stand in awe. An aristocracy fallen into contempt is a *roi fainéant*, a husband in petticoats; first it ceases to be itself, and then it ceases to be.

And in this way the isolation of the great, the sharply marked distinction in their manner of life, or in a word, the general custom of the patrician caste is at once the sign of a real power, and their destruction so soon as that power is lost. The Faubourg Saint-Germain failed to recognize the conditions of its being, while it would still have been easy to perpetuate its existence, and therefore was brought low for a time. The Faubourg should have looked the facts fairly in the face, as the English aristocracy did before them; they should have seen that every institution has its climacteric periods, when words lose their old meanings, and ideas reappear in a new guise, and the whole conditions of politics wear a changed aspect, while the underlying realities undergo no essential alteration.

These ideas demand further developments which form an essential part of this episode; they are given here both as a succinct statement of the causes, and an explanation of the things which happen in the course of the story.

The stateliness of the castles and palaces where nobles dwell; the luxury of the details; the constantly maintained sumptuousness of the furniture; the "atmosphere" in which the fortunate owner of landed estates (a rich man before he was born) lives and moves easily and without friction; the habit of mind which never descends to calculate the petty work-a-day gains of existence; the leisure; the higher education attainable at a much earlier age; and lastly, the aristocratic tradition that makes of him a social force, for which his opponents, by dint of study and a strong will and tenacity of vocation, are scarcely a match—all these things should contribute to form a lofty spirit in a man possessed of such privileges from his youth up; they should stamp his character with that high self-respect, of which the least conse-

quence is a nobleness of heart in harmony with the noble name that he bears. And in some few families all this is realized. There are noble characters here and there in the Faubourg, but they are marked exceptions to a general rule of egoism which has been the ruin of this world within a world. The privileges above enumerated are the birthright of the French noblesse, as of every patrician efflorescence ever formed on the surface of a nation; and will continue to be theirs so long as their existence is based upon real estate, or money; *domaine-sol* and *domaine-argent* alike, the only solid bases of an organized society; but such privileges are held upon the understanding that the patricians must continue to justify their existence. There is a sort of moral *fief* held on a tenure of service rendered to the sovereign, and here in France the people are undoubtedly the sovereigns nowadays. The times are changed, and so are the weapons. The knight-banneret of old wore a coat of chain armor and a hauberk; he could handle a lance well and display his pennon, and no more was required of him; to-day he is bound to give proof of his intelligence. A stout heart was enough in the days of old; in our days he is required to have a capacious brain-pan. Skill and knowledge and capital—these three points mark out a social triangle on which the scutcheon of power is blazoned; our modern aristocracy must take its stand on these.

A fine theorem is as good as a great name. The Rothschilds, the Fuggers of the nineteenth century, are princes *de facto*. A great artist is in reality an oligarch; he represents a whole century, and almost always he is a law to others. And the art of words, the high-pressure machinery of the writer, the poet's genius, the merchant's steady endurance, the strong will of the statesman who concentrates a thousand dazzling qualities in himself, the general's sword—all these victories, in short, which a single individual will win, that he may tower above the rest of the world, the patrician class is now bound to win and keep exclusively. They must head the new forces as they once headed the material forces; how

should they keep the position unless they are worthy of it? How, unless they are the soul and brain of a nation, shall they set its hands moving? How lead a people without the power of command? And what is the marshal's bâton without the innate power of the captain in the man who wields it? The Faubourg Saint-Germain took to playing with bâtons, and fancied that all the power was in its hands. It inverted the terms of the proposition which called it into existence. And instead of flinging away the insignia which offended the people, and quietly grasping the power, it allowed the bourgeoisie to seize the authority, clung with fatal obstinacy to its shadow, and over and over again forgot the laws which a minority must observe if it would live. When an aristocracy is scarce a thousandth part of the body social, it is bound to-day, as of old, to multiply its points of action, so as to counterbalance the weight of the masses in a great crisis. And in our days those means of action must be living forces, and not historical memories.

In France, unluckily, the noblesse were still so puffed up with the notion of their vanished power, that it was difficult to contend against a kind of innate presumption in themselves. Perhaps this is a national defect. The Frenchman is less given than any one else to undervalue himself; it comes natural to him to go from his degree to the one above it; and while it is a rare thing for him to pity the unfortunates over whose heads he rises, he always groans in spirit to see so many fortunate people above him. He is very far from heartless, but too often he prefers to listen to his intellect. The national instinct which brings the Frenchman to the front, the vanity that wastes his substance, is as much a dominant passion as thrift in the Dutch. For three centuries it swayed the noblesse, who, in this respect, were certainly pre-eminently French. The scion of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, beholding his material superiority, was fully persuaded of his intellectual superiority. And everything contributed to confirm him in his belief; for ever since the Faubourg Saint-Germain existed at all—which is to say, ever

since Versailles ceased to be the royal residence—the Faubourg, with some few gaps in continuity, was always backed up by the central power, which in France seldom fails to support that side. Thence its downfall in 1830.

At that time the party of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was rather like an army without a base of operation. It had utterly failed to take advantage of the peace to plant itself in the heart of the nation. It sinned for want of learning its lesson, and through an utter incapability of regarding its interests as a whole. A future certainty was sacrificed to a doubtful present gain. This blunder in policy may perhaps be attributed to the following cause.

The class-isolation so strenuously kept up by the noblesse brought about fatal results during the last forty years; even caste-patriotism was extinguished by it, and rivalry fostered among themselves. When the French noblesse of other times were rich and powerful, the nobles (*gentilhommes*) could choose their chiefs and obey them in the hour of danger. As their power diminished, they grew less amenable to discipline; and, as in the last days of the Byzantine Empire, every one wished to be emperor. They mistook their uniform weakness for uniform strength.

Each family ruined by the Revolution and the abolition of the law of primogeniture thought only of itself, and not at all of the great family of the noblesse. It seemed to them that as each individual grew rich, the party as a whole would gain in strength. And herein lay their mistake. Money, likewise, is only the outward and visible sign of power. All these families were made up of persons who preserved a high tradition of courtesy, of true graciousness of life, of refined speech, with a family pride, and a squeamish sense of *noblesse oblige* which suited well with the kind of life they led; a life wholly filled with occupations which become contemptible so soon as they cease to be accessories and take the chief place in existence. There was a certain intrinsic merit in all these people, but the merit was on the surface, and none of them was worth their face-value.

Not a single one among those families had courage to ask itself the question, "Are we strong enough for the responsibility of power?" They were cast on the top, like the lawyers of 1830; and instead of taking the patron's place, like a great man, the Faubourg Saint-Germain showed itself greedy as an upstart. The most intelligent nation in the world perceived clearly that the restored nobles were organizing everything for their own particular benefit. From that day the noblesse was doomed. The Faubourg Saint-Germain tried to be an aristocracy when it could only be an oligarchy —two very different systems, as any man may see for himself if he gives an intelligent perusal to the list of the patronymics of the House of Peers.

The King's Government certainly meant well; but the maxim that the people must be made to *will* everything, even their own welfare, was pretty constantly forgotten, nor did they bear in mind that La France is a woman and capricious, and must be happy or chastised at her own good pleasure. If there had been many dukes like the Duc de Laval, whose modesty made him worthy of the name he bore, the elder branch would have been as securely seated on the throne as the House of Hanover at this day.

In 1814 the noblesse of France were called upon to assert their superiority over the most aristocratic bourgeoisie in the most feminine of all countries, to take the lead in the most highly educated epoch the world had yet seen. And this was even more notably the case in 1820. The Faubourg Saint-Germain might very easily have led and amused the middle classes in days when people's heads were turned with distinctions, and art and science were all the rage. But the narrow-minded leaders of a time of great intellectual progress all of them detested art and science. They had not even the wit to present religion in attractive colors, though they needed its support. While Lamartine, Lamennais, Montalembert, and other writers were putting new life and elevation into men's ideas of religion, and gilding it with poetry, these bunglers in the Government chose to make the harshness of

their creed felt all over the country. Never was nation in a more tractable humor; La France, like a tired woman, was ready to agree to anything; never was mismanagement so clumsy; and La France, like a woman, would have forgiven wrongs more easily than bungling.

If the noblesse meant to reinstate themselves, the better to found a strong oligarchy, they should have honestly and diligently searched their Houses for men of the stamp that Napoleon used; they should have turned themselves inside out to see if peradventure there was a Constitutionalist Richelieu lurking in the entrails of the Faubourg; and if that genius was not forthcoming from among them, they should have set out to find him, even in the fireless garret where he might happen to be perishing of cold; they should have assimilated him, as the English House of Lords continually assimilates aristocrats made by chance; and finally ordered him to be ruthless, to lop away the old wood, and cut the tree down to the living shoots. But, in the first place, the great system of English Toryism was far too large for narrow minds; the importation required time, and in France a tardy success is no better than a fiasco. So far, moreover, from adopting a policy of redemption, and looking for new forces where God puts them, these petty great folk took a dislike to any capacity that did not issue from their midst; and, lastly, instead of growing young again, the Faubourg Saint-Germain grew positively older.

Etiquette, not an institution of primary necessity, might have been maintained if it had appeared only on state occasions, but as it was, there was a daily wrangle over precedence; it ceased to be a matter of art or court ceremonial, it became a question of power. And if from the outset the Crown lacked an adviser equal to so great a crisis, the aristocracy was still more lacking in a sense of its wider interests, an instinct which might have supplied the deficiency. They stood nice about M. de Talleyrand's marriage, when M. de Talleyrand was the one man among them with the steel-encompassed brains that can forge a new political sys-

tem and begin a new career of glory for a nation. The Faubourg scoffed at a minister if he was not gently born, and produced no one of gentle birth that was fit to be a minister. There were plenty of nobles fitted to serve their country by raising the dignity of justices of the peace, by improving the land, by opening out roads and canals, and taking an active and leading part as country gentlemen; but these had sold their estates to gamble on the Stock Exchange. Again the Faubourg might have absorbed the energetic men among the bourgeoisie, and opened their ranks to the ambition which was undermining authority; they preferred instead to fight, and to fight unarmed, for of all that they once possessed there was nothing left but tradition. For their misfortune there was just precisely enough of their former wealth left them as a class to keep up their bitter pride. They were content with their past. Not one of them seriously thought of bidding the son of the house take up arms from the pile of weapons which the Nineteenth Century flings down in the market-place. Young men, shut out from office, were dancing at Madame's balls, while they should have been doing the work done under the Republic and the Empire by young, conscientious, harmlessly employed energies. It was their place to carry out at Paris the programme which their seniors should have been following in the country. The heads of houses might have won back recognition of their titles by unremitting attention to local interests, by falling in with the spirit of the age, by recasting their order to suit the taste of the times.

But, pent up together in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where the spirit of the ancient court and traditions of bygone feuds between the nobles and the Crown still lingered on, the aristocracy was not whole-hearted in its allegiance to the Tuileries, and so much the more easily defeated because it was concentrated in the Chamber of Peers, and badly organized even there. If the noblesse had woven themselves into a network over the country, they could have held their own; but cooped up in their Faubourg, with their backs against

the Chateau, or spread at full length over the Budget, a single blow cut the thread of a fast-expiring life, and a petty, smug-faced lawyer came forward with the axe. In spite of M. Royer-Collard's admirable discourse, the hereditary peerage and law of entail fell before the lampoons of a man who made it a boast that he had adroitly argued some few heads out of the executioner's clutches, and now forsooth must clumsily proceed to the slaying of old institutions.

There are examples and lessons for the future in all this. For if there were not still a future before the French aristocracy, there would be no need to do more than find a suitable sarcophagus; it were something pitilessly cruel to burn the dead body of it with fire of Tophet. But though the surgeon's scalpel is ruthless, it sometimes gives back life to a dying man; and the Faubourg Saint-Germain may wax more powerful under persecution than in its day of triumph, if it but chooses to organize itself under a leader.

And now it is easy to give a summary of this semi-political survey. The wish to re-establish a large fortune was uppermost in every one's mind; a lack of broad views, and a mass of small defects, a real need of religion as a political factor, combined with a thirst for pleasure which damaged the cause of religion and necessitated a good deal of hypocrisy; a certain attitude of protest on the part of loftier and clearer-sighted men who set their faces against Court jealousies; and the disaffection of the provincial families, who often came of purer descent than the nobles of the Court which alienated them from itself—all these things combined to bring about a most discordant state of things in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. It was neither compact in its organization, nor consequent in its action; neither completely moral, nor frankly dissolute; it did not corrupt, nor was it corrupted; it would neither wholly abandon the disputed points which damaged its cause, nor yet adopt the policy that might have saved it. In short, however effete individuals might be, the party as a whole was none the less armed with all the great principles which lie at the roots of national

existence. What was there in the Faubourg that it should perish in its strength?

It was very hard to please in the choice of candidates; the Faubourg had good taste, it was scornfully fastidious, yet there was nothing very glorious nor chivalrous truly about its fall.

In the Emigration of 1789 there were some traces of a loftier feeling; but in the Emigration of 1830 from Paris into the country there was nothing discernible but self-interest. A few famous men of letters, a few oratorical triumphs in the Chambers, M. de Talleyrand's attitude in the Congress, the taking of Algiers, and not a few names that found their way from the battlefield into the pages of history—all these things were so many examples set before the French noblesse to show that it was still open to them to take their part in the national existence, and to win recognition of their claims, if, indeed, they could condescend thus far. In every living organism the work of bringing the whole into harmony within itself is always going on. If a man is indolent, the indolence shows itself in everything that he does; and, in the same manner, the general spirit of a class is pretty plainly manifested in the face it turns on the world, and the soul informs the body.

The women of the Restoration displayed neither the proud disregard of public opinion shown by the court ladies of olden time in their wantonness, nor yet the simple grandeur of the tardy virtues by which they expiated their sins and shed so bright a glory about their names. There was nothing either very frivolous or very serious about the woman of the Restoration. She was hypocritical as a rule in her passion, and compounded, so to speak, with its pleasures. Some few families led the domestic life of the Duchesse d'Orléans, whose connubial couch was exhibited so absurdly to visitors at the Palais Royal. Two or three kept up the traditions of the Regency, filling cleverer women with something like disgust. The great lady of the new school exercised no influence at all over the manners of the

time; and yet she might have done much. She might, at worst, have presented as dignified a spectacle as Englishwomen of the same rank. But she hesitated feebly among old precedents, became a bigot by force of circumstances, and allowed nothing of herself to appear, not even her better qualities.

Not one among the Frenchwomen of that day had the ability to create a salon whither leaders of fashion might come to take lessons in taste and elegance. Their voices, which once laid down the law to literature, that living expression of a time, now counted absolutely for naught. Now when a literature lacks a general system, it fails to shape a body for itself and dies out with its period.

When in a nation at any time there is a people apart thus constituted, the historian is pretty certain to find some representative figure, some central personage who embodies the qualities and the defects of the whole party to which he belongs; there is Coligny, for instance, among the Huguenots, the Coadjuteur in the time of the Fronde, the Maréchal de Richelieu under Louis XV., Danton during the Terror. It is in the nature of things that the man should be identified with the company in which history finds him. How is it possible to lead a party without conforming to its ideas? or to shine in any epoch unless a man represents the ideas of his time? The wise and prudent head of a party is continually obliged to bow to the prejudices and follies of its rear; and this is the cause of actions for which he is afterward criticised by this or that historian sitting at a safer distance from terrific popular explosions, coolly judging the passion and ferment without which the great struggles of the world could not be carried on at all. And if this is true of the Historical Comedy of the Centuries, it is equally true in a more restricted sphere in the detached scenes of the national drama known as the "Manners of the Age."

At the beginning of that ephemeral life led by the Faubourg Saint-Germain under the Restoration, to which,

if there is any truth in the above reflections, they failed to give stability, the most perfect type of the aristocratic caste in its weakness and strength, its greatness and littleness, might have been found for a brief space in a young married woman who belonged to it. This was a woman artificially educated, but in reality ignorant; a woman whose instincts and feelings were lofty, while the thought which should have controlled them was wanting. She squandered the wealth of her nature in obedience to social conventions; she was ready to brave society, yet she hesitated till her scruples degenerated into artifice. With more wilfulness than real force of character, impressionable rather than enthusiastic, gifted with more brain than heart; she was supremely a woman, supremely a coquette, and above all things a Parisienne, loving a brilliant life and gayety, reflecting never, or too late; imprudent to the verge of poetry, and humble in the depths of her heart, in spite of her charming insolence. Like some straight-growing reed, she made a show of independence; yet, like the reed, she was ready to bend to a strong hand. She talked much of religion, and had it not at heart, though she was prepared to find in it a solution of her life. How explain a creature so complex? Capable of heroism, yet sinking unconsciously from heroic heights to utter a spiteful word; young and sweet-natured, not so much old at heart as aged by the maxims of those about her; versed in a selfish philosophy in which she was all unpracticed, she had all the vices of a courtier, all the nobleness of developing womanhood. She trusted nothing and no one, yet there were times when she quitted her sceptical attitude for a submissive credulity.

How should any portrait be anything but incomplete of her, in whom the play of swiftly-changing color made discord only to produce a poetic confusion? for in her there shone a divine brightness, a radiance of youth that blended all her bewildering characteristics in a certain completeness and unity informed by her charm. Nothing was feigned.

The passion or semi-passion, the ineffectual high aspirations, the actual pettiness, the coolness of sentiment and warmth of impulse, were all spontaneous and unaffected, and as much the outcome of her own position as of the position of the aristocracy to which she belonged. She was wholly self-contained; she put herself proudly above the world and beneath the shelter of her name. There was something of the egoism of Medea in her life, as in the life of the aristocracy that lay a-dying, and would not so much as raise itself or stretch out a hand to any political physician; so well aware of its feebleness, or so conscious that it was already dust, that it refused to touch or be touched.

The Duchesse de Langeais (for that was her name) had been married for about four years when the Restoration was finally consummated, which is to say, in 1816. By that time the revolution of the Hundred Days had let in the light on the mind of Louis XVIII. In spite of his surroundings, he comprehended the situation and the age in which he was living; and it was only later, when this Louis XI., without the axe, lay stricken down by disease, that those about him got the upper hand. The Duchesse de Langeais, a Navarreins by birth, came of a ducal house which had made a point of never marrying below its rank since the reign of Louis XIV. Every daughter of the house must sooner or later take a *tabouret* at Court. So, Antoinette de Navarreins, at the age of eighteen, came out of the profound solitude in which her girlhood had been spent to marry the Duc de Langeais's eldest son. The two families at that time were living quite out of the world; but after the invasion of France, the return of the Bourbons seemed to every Royalist mind the only possible way of putting an end to the miseries of the war.

The Ducs de Navarreins and De Langeais had been faithful throughout to the exiled Princes, nobly resisting all the temptations of glory under the Empire. Under the circumstances they naturally followed out the old family policy;

and Mlle. Antoinette, a beautiful and portionless girl, was married to M. le Marquis de Langeais only a few months before the death of the Duke his father.

After the return of the Bourbons, the families resumed their rank, offices, and dignity at Court; once more they entered public life, from which hitherto they held aloof, and took their place high on the sunlit summits of the new political world. In that time of general baseness and sham political conversions, the public conscience was glad to recognize the unstained loyalty of the two houses, and a consistency in political and private life for which all parties involuntarily respected them. But, unfortunately, as so often happens in a time of transition, the most disinterested persons, the men whose loftiness of view and wise principles would have gained the confidence of the French nation and led them to believe in the generosity of a novel and spirited policy;—these men, to repeat, were taken out of affairs, and public business was allowed to fall into the hands of others, who found it to their interest to push principles to their extreme consequences by way of proving their devotion.

The families of Langeais and Navarreins remained about the Court, condemned to perform the duties required by Court ceremonial amid the reproaches and sneers of the Liberal party. They were accused of gorging themselves with riches and honors, and all the while their family estates were no larger than before, and liberal allowances from the civil list were wholly expended in keeping up the state necessary for any European government, even if it be a Republic.

In 1818, M. le Duc de Langeais commanded a division of the army, and the Duchess held a post about one of the Princesses, in virtue of which she was free to live in Paris and apart from her husband without scandal. The Duke, moreover, besides his military duties, had a place at Court, to which he came during his term of waiting, leaving his major-general in command. The Duke and Duchess were

leading lives entirely apart, the world none the wiser. Their marriage of convention shared the fate of nearly all family arrangements of the kind. Two more antipathetic dispositions could not well have been found; they were brought together; they jarred upon each other; there was soreness on either side; then they were divided once for all. Then they went their separate ways, with a due regard for appearances. The Duc de Langeais, by nature as methodical as the Chevalier de Folard himself, gave himself up methodically to his own tastes and amusements, and left his wife at liberty to do as she pleased so soon as he felt sure of her character. He recognized in her a spirit pre-eminently proud, a cold heart, a profound submissiveness to the usages of the world, and a youthful loyalty. Under the eyes of great relations, with the light of a prudish and bigoted Court turned full upon the Duchess, his honor was safe.

So the Duke calmly did as the *grands seigneurs* of the eighteenth century did before him, and left a young wife of two-and-twenty to her own devices. He had deeply offended that wife, and in her nature there was one appalling characteristic—she would never forgive an offence when woman's vanity and self-love, with all that was best in her nature perhaps, had been slighted, wounded in secret. Insult and injury in the face of the world a woman loves to forget; there is a way open to her of showing herself great; she is a woman in her forgiveness; but a secret offence women never pardon; for secret baseness, as for hidden virtues and hidden love, they have no kindness.

This was Mme. la Duchesse de Langeais's real position, unknown to the world. She herself did not reflect upon it. It was the time of the rejoicing over the Duc de Berri's marriage. The Court and the Faubourg roused itself from its listlessness and reserve. This was the real beginning of that unheard-of splendor which the Government of the Restoration carried too far. At that time the Duchess, whether for reasons of her own, or from vanity, never

appeared in public without a following of women equally distinguished by name and fortune. As queen of fashion she had her *dames d'atours*, her ladies, who modelled their manner and their wit on hers. They had been cleverly chosen. None of her satellites belonged to the inmost Court circle, nor to the highest level of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; but they had set their minds upon admission to those inner sanctuaries. Being as yet simple dominations, they wished to rise to the neighborhood of the throne, and mingle with the seraphic powers in the high sphere known as *le petit château*. Thus surrounded, the Duchess's position was stronger and more commanding and secure. Her "ladies" defended her character and helped her to play her detestable part of a woman of fashion. She could laugh at men at her ease, play with fire, receive the homage on which the feminine nature is nourished, and remain mistress of herself.

At Paris, in the highest society of all, a woman is a woman still; she lives on incense, adulation, and honors. No beauty, however undoubted, no face, however fair, is anything without admiration. Flattery and a lover are proofs of power. And what is power without recognition? Nothing. If the prettiest of women were left alone in a corner of a drawing-room, she would droop. Put her in the very centre and summit of social grandeur, she will at once aspire to reign over all hearts—often because it is out of her power to be the happy queen of one. Dress and manner and coquetry are all meant to please one of the poorest creatures extant—the brainless coxcomb, whose handsome face is his sole merit; it was for such as these that women threw themselves away. The gilded wooden idols of the Restoration, for they were neither more nor less, had neither the antecedents of the *petits maîtres* of the time of the Fronde, nor the rough sterling worth of Napoleon's heroes, nor the wit and fine manners of their grandsires; but something of all three they meant to be without any trouble to themselves. Brave

they were, like all young Frenchmen; ability they possessed, no doubt, if they had had a chance of proving it, but their places were filled up by the old worn-out men, who kept them in leading strings. It was a day of small things, a cold prosaic era. Perhaps it takes a long time for a Restoration to become a Monarchy.

For the past eighteen months the Duchesse de Langeais had been leading this empty life, filled with balls and subsequent visits, objectless triumphs, and the transient loves that spring up and die in an evening's space. All eyes were turned on her when she entered a room; she reaped her harvest of flatteries and some few words of warmer admiration, which she encouraged by a gesture or a glance, but never suffered to penetrate deeper than the skin. Her tone and bearing and everything else about her imposed her will upon others. Her life was a sort of fever of vanity and perpetual enjoyment, which turned her head. She was daring enough in conversation; she would listen to anything, corrupting the surface, as it were, of her heart. Yet when she returned home, she often blushed at the story that had made her laugh; at the scandalous tale that supplied the details, on the strength of which she analyzed the love that she had never known, and marked the subtle distinctions of modern passion, not without comment on the part of complacent hypocrites. For women know how to say everything among themselves, and more of them are ruined by each other than corrupted by men.

There came a moment when she discerned that not until a woman is loved will the world fully recognize her beauty and her wit. What does a husband prove? Simply that a girl or woman was endowed with wealth, or well brought up; that her mother managed cleverly; that in some way she satisfied a man's ambitions. A lover constantly bears witness to her personal perfections. Then followed the discovery, still in Mme. de Langeais's early womanhood, that it was possible to be loved without committing herself, with-

out permission, without vouchsafing any satisfaction beyond the most meagre dues. There was more than one demure feminine hypocrite to instruct her in the art of playing such dangerous comedies.

So the Duchess had her court, and the number of her adorers and courtiers guaranteed her virtue. She was amiable and fascinating; she flirted till the ball or the evening's gayety was at an end. Then the curtain dropped. She was cold, indifferent, self-contained again, till the next day brought its renewed sensations, superficial as before. Two or three men were completely deceived, and fell in love in earnest. She laughed at them, she was utterly insensible. "I am loved!" she told herself. "He loves me!" The certainty sufficed her. It is enough for the miser to know that his every whim might be fulfilled if he chose; so it was with the Duchess, and perhaps she did not even go so far as to form a wish.

One evening she chanced to be at the house of an intimate friend, Mme. la Vicomtesse de Fontaine, one of the humble rivals who cordially detested her, and went with her everywhere. In a "friendship" of this sort both sides are on their guard, and never lay their armor aside; confidences are ingeniously indiscreet, and not infrequently treacherous. Mme. de Langeais had distributed her little patronizing, friendly, or freezing bows, with the air natural to a woman who knows the worth of her smiles, when her eyes fell upon a total stranger. Something in the man's large gravity of aspect startled her, and, with a feeling almost like dread, she turned to Mme. de Maufrigneuse with, "Who is the newcomer, dear?"

"Some one that you have heard of, no doubt. The Marquis de Montriveau."

"Oh! is it he?"

She took up her eyeglass and submitted him to a very insolent scrutiny, as if he had been a picture meant to receive glances, not to return them.

"Do introduce him; he ought to be interesting."

"Nobody more tiresome and dull, dear. But he is the fashion."

M. Armand de Montriveau, at that moment all unwittingly the object of general curiosity, better deserved attention than any of the idols that Paris needs must set up to worship for a brief space, for the city is vexed by periodical fits of craving, a passion for *engouement* and sham enthusiasm, which must be satisfied. The Marquis was the only son of General de Montriveau, one of the *ci-devants* who served the Republic nobly, and fell by Joubert's side at Novi. Bonaparte had placed his son at the school at Châlons, with the orphans of other generals who fell on the battlefield, leaving their children under the protection of the Republic. Armand de Montriveau left school with his way to make, entered the artillery, and had only reached a major's rank at the time of the Fontainebleau disaster. In his section of the service the chances of advancement were not many. There are fewer officers, in the first place, among the gunners than in any other corps; and in the second place, the feeling in the artillery was decidedly Liberal, not to say Republican; and the Emperor, feeling little confidence in a body of highly educated men who were apt to think for themselves, gave promotion grudgingly in the service. In the artillery, accordingly, the general rule of the army did not apply; the commanding officers were not invariably the most remarkable men in their department, because there was less to be feared from mediocrities. The artillery was a separate corps in those days, and only came under Napoleon in action.

Besides these general causes, other reasons, inherent in Armand de Montriveau's character, were sufficient in themselves to account for his tardy promotion. He was alone in the world. He had been thrown at the age of twenty into the whirlwind of men directed by Napoleon; his interests were bounded by himself, any day he might lose his life; it became a habit of mind with him to live by his own self-respect and the consciousness that he had done his duty. Like all shy men, he was habitually silent; but his shyness sprang by no

means from timidity; it was a kind of modesty in him; he found any demonstration of vanity intolerable. There was no sort of swagger about his fearlessness in action; nothing escaped his eyes; he could give sensible advice to his chums with unshaken coolness; he could go under fire, and duck upon occasion to avoid bullets. He was kindly; but his expression was haughty and stern, and his face gained him this character. In everything he was rigorous as arithmetic; he never permitted the slightest deviation from duty on any plausible pretext, nor blinked the consequences of a fact. He would lend himself to nothing of which he was ashamed; he never asked anything for himself; in short, Armand de Montriveau was one of many great men unknown to fame, and philosophical enough to despise it; living without attaching themselves to life, because they have not found their opportunity of developing to the full their power to do and feel.

People were afraid of Montriveau; they respected him, but he was not very popular. Men may indeed allow you to rise above them, but to decline to descend as low as they can do is the one unpardonable sin. In their feeling toward loftier natures there is a trace of hate and fear. Too much honor with them implies censure of themselves, a thing forgiven neither to the living nor to the dead.

After the Emperor's farewells at Fontainebleau, Montriveau, noble though he was, was put on half-pay. Perhaps the heads of the War Office took fright at uncompromising uprightness worthy of antiquity, or perhaps it was known that he felt bound by his oath to the Imperial Eagle. During the Hundred Days he was made a Colonel of the Guard, and left on the field of Waterloo. His wounds kept him in Belgium; he was not present at the disbanding of the Army of the Loire, but the King's government declined to recognize promotion made during the Hundred Days, and Armand de Montriveau left France.

An adventurous spirit, a loftiness of thought hitherto satisfied by the hazards of war, drove him on an exploring expedition through Upper Egypt; his sanity of impulse

directed his enthusiasm to a project of great importance, he turned his attention to that unexplored Central Africa which occupies the learned of to-day. The scientific expedition was long and unfortunate. He had made a valuable collection of notes bearing on various geographical and commercial problems, of which solutions are still eagerly sought; and succeeded, after surmounting many obstacles, in reaching the heart of the continent, when he was betrayed into the hands of a hostile native tribe. Then, stripped of all that he had, for two years he led a wandering life in the desert, the slave of savages, threatened with death at every moment, and more cruelly treated than a dumb animal in the power of pitiless children. Physical strength, and a mind braced to endurance, enabled him to survive the horrors of that captivity; but his miraculous escape wellnigh exhausted his energies. When he reached the French colony at Senegal, a half-dead fugitive covered with rags, his memories of his former life were dim and shapeless. The great sacrifices made in his travels were all forgotten like his studies of African dialects, his discoveries, and observations. One story will give an idea of all that he passed through. Once for several days the children of the sheik of the tribe amused themselves by putting him up for a mark and flinging horses' knuckle-bones at his head.

Montriveau came back to Paris in 1818 a ruined man. He had no interest, and wished for none. He would have died twenty times over sooner than ask a favor of any one; he would not even press the recognition of his claims. Adversity and hardship had developed his energy even in trifles, while the habit of preserving his self-respect before that spiritual self which we call conscience led him to attach consequence to the most apparently trivial actions. His merits and adventures became known, however, through his acquaintances, among the principal men of science in Paris, and some few well-read military men. The incidents of his slavery and subsequent escape bore witness to a courage, intelligence, and coolness which won him celebrity without

his knowledge, and that transient fame of which Paris salons are lavish, though the artist that fain would keep it must make untold efforts.

Montriveau's position suddenly changed toward the end of that year. He had been a poor man, he was now rich; or, externally at any rate, he had all the advantages of wealth. The King's government, trying to attach capable men to itself and to strengthen the army, made concessions about that time to Napoleon's old officers if their known loyalty and character offered guarantees of fidelity. M. de Montriveau's name once more appeared in the army list with the rank of colonel; he received his arrears of pay and passed into the Guards. All these favors, one after another, came to seek the Marquis de Montriveau; he had asked for nothing however small. Friends had taken the steps for him which he would have refused to take for himself.

After this, his habits were modified all at once; contrary to his custom, he went into society. He was well received, everywhere he met with great deference and respect. He seemed to have found some end in life; but everything passed within the man, there were no external signs; in society he was silent and cold, and wore a grave, reserved face. His social success was great, precisely because he stood out in such strong contrast to the conventional faces which line the walls of Paris salons. He was, indeed, something quite new there. Terse of speech, like a hermit or a savage, his shyness was thought to be haughtiness, and people were greatly taken with it. He was something strange and great. Women generally were so much the more smitten with this original person because he was not to be caught by their flatteries, however adroit, nor by the wiles with which they circumvent the strongest men and corrode the steel temper. Their Parisian's grimaces were lost upon M. de Montriveau; his nature only responded to the sonorous vibration of lofty thought and feeling. And he would very promptly have been dropped but for the romance that hung about his adventures and his life; but for the men who cried him up behind his back; but

for a woman who looked for a triumph for her vanity, the woman who was to fill his thoughts.

For these reasons the Duchesse de Langeais's curiosity was no less lively than natural. Chance had so ordered it that her interest in the man before her had been aroused only the day before, when she heard the story of one of M. de Montriveau's adventures, a story calculated to make the strongest impression upon a woman's ever-changing fancy.

During M. de Montriveau's voyage of discovery to the sources of the Nile, he had had an argument with one of his guides, surely the most extraordinary debate in the annals of travel. The district that he wished to explore could only be reached on foot across a tract of desert. Only one of his guides knew the way; no traveller had penetrated before into that part of the country, where the undaunted officer hoped to find a solution of several scientific problems. In spite of the representations made to him by the guide and the older men of the place, he started upon the formidable journey. Summoning up courage, already highly strung by the prospect of dreadful difficulties, he set out in the morning.

The loose sand shifted under his feet at every step; and when, at the end of a long day's march, he lay down to sleep on the ground, he had never been so tired in his life. He knew, however, that he must be up and on his way before dawn next day, and his guide assured him that they should reach the end of their journey toward noon. That promise kept up his courage and gave him new strength. In spite of his sufferings, he continued his march, with some blasphemings against science; he was ashamed to complain to his guide, and kept his pain to himself. After marching for a third of the day, he felt his strength failing, his feet were bleeding, he asked if they should reach the place soon. "In an hour's time," said the guide. Armand braced himself for another hour's march, and they went on.

The hour slipped by; he could not so much as see against the sky the palm-trees and crests of hill that should tell of the

end of the journey near at hand; the horizon line of sand was vast as the circle of the open sea.

He came to a stand, refused to go further, and threatened the guide—he had deceived him, murdered him; tears of rage and weariness flowed over his fevered cheeks; he was bowed down with fatigue upon fatigue, his throat seemed to be glued by the desert thirst. The guide meanwhile stood motionless, listening to these complaints with an ironical expression, studying the while, with the apparent indifference of an Oriental, the scarcely perceptible indications in the lay of the sands, which looked almost black, like burnished gold.

"I have made a mistake," he remarked coolly. "I could not make out the track, it is so long since I came this way; we are surely on it now, but we must push on for two hours."

"The man is right," thought M. de Montriveau.

So he went on again, struggling to follow the pitiless native. It seemed as if he were bound to his guide by some thread like the invisible tie between the condemned man and the headsman. But the two hours went by, Montriveau had spent his last drops of energy, and the sky-line was a blank, there were no palm-trees, no hills. He could neither cry out nor groan, he lay down on the sand to die, but his eyes would have frightened the boldest; something in his face seemed to say that he would not die alone. His guide, like a very fiend, gave him back a cool glance like a man that knows his power, left him to lie there, and kept at a safe distance out of reach of his desperate victim. At last M. Montriveau recovered strength enough for a last curse. The guide came nearer, silenced him with a steady look, and said, "Was it not your own will to go where I am taking you, in spite of us all? You say that I have lied to you. If I had not, you would not be even here. Do you want the truth? Here it is. *We have still another five hours' march before us, and we cannot go back.* Sound yourself; if you have not courage enough, here is my dagger."

Startled by this dreadful knowledge of pain and human

strength, M. de Montriveau would not be behind a savage; he drew a fresh stock of courage from his pride as a European, rose to his feet, and followed his guide. The five hours were at an end, and still M. de Montriveau saw nothing, he turned his failing eyes upon his guide; but the Nubian hoisted him on his shoulders, and showed him a wide pool of water with greenness all about it, and a noble forest lighted up by the sunset. It lay only a hundred paces away; a vast ledge of granite hid the glorious landscape. It seemed to Armand that he had taken a new lease of life. His guide, that giant in courage and intelligence, finished his work of devotion by carrying him across the hot, slippery, scarcely discernible track on the granite. Behind him lay the hell of burning sand, before him the earthly paradise of the most beautiful oasis in the desert.

The Duchess, struck from the first by the appearance of this romantic figure, was even more impressed when she learned that this was that Marquis de Montriveau of whom she had dreamed during the night. She had been with him among the hot desert sands, he had been the companion of her nightmare wanderings; for such a woman was not this a delightful presage of a new interest in her life? And never was a man's exterior a better exponent of his character; never were curious glances so well justified. The principal characteristic of his great, square-hewn head was the thick, luxuriant black hair which framed his face, and gave him a strikingly close resemblance to General Kléber; and the likeness still held good in the vigorous forehead, in the outlines of his face, the quiet fearlessness of his eyes, and a kind of fiery vehemence expressed by strongly marked features. He was short, deep-chested, and muscular as a lion. There was something of the despot about him, and an indescribable suggestion of the security of strength in his gait, bearing, and slightest movements. He seemed to know that his will was irresistible, perhaps because he wished for nothing unjust. And yet, like all really strong men, he was mild of speech, simple in his manners, and kindly natured;

although it seemed as if, in the stress of a great crisis, all these finer qualities must disappear, and the man would show himself implacable, unshaken in his resolve, terrific in action. There was a certain drawing in of the inner line of the lips which, to a close observer, indicated an ironical bent.

The Duchesse de Langeais, realizing that a fleeting glory was to be won by such a conquest, made up her mind to gain a lover in Armand de Montriveau during the brief interval before the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse brought him to be introduced. She would prefer him above the others; she would attach him to herself, display all her powers of coquetry for him. It was a fancy, such a merest duchess's whim as furnished a Lope or a Calderon with the plot of the "Dog in the Manger." She would not suffer another woman to engross him; but she had not the remotest intention of being his.

Nature had given the Duchess every qualification for the part of coquette, and education had perfected her. Women envied her, and men fell in love with her, not without reason. Nothing that can inspire love, justify it, and give it lasting empire was wanting in her. Her style of beauty, her manner, her voice, her bearing, all combined to give her that instinctive coquetry which seems to be the consciousness of power. Her shape was graceful; perhaps there was a trace of self-consciousness in her changes of movement, the one affectation that could be laid to her charge; but everything about her was a part of her personality, from her least little gesture to the peculiar turn of her phrases, the demure glance of her eyes. Her great lady's grace, her most striking characteristic, had not destroyed the very French quick mobility of her person. There was an extraordinary fascination in her swift, incessant changes of attitude. She seemed as if she surely would be a most delicious mistress when her corset and the incumbering costume of her part was laid aside. All the rapture of love surely was latent in the freedom of her expressive glances, in her caressing tones, in the charm of

her words. She gave glimpses of the high-born courtesan within her, vainly protesting against the creeds of the duchess.

You might sit near her through an evening, she would be gay and melancholy in turn, and her gayety, like her sadness, seemed spontaneous. She could be gracious, disdainful, insolent, or confiding at will. Her apparent good nature was real; she had no temptation to descend to malignity. But at each moment her mood changed; she was full of confidence or craft; her moving tenderness would give place to a heartbreaking hardness and insensibility. Yet how paint her as she was, without bringing together all the extremes of feminine nature? In a word, the Duchess was anything that she wished to be or to seem. Her face was slightly too long. There was a grace in it, and a certain thinness and fineness that recalled the portraits of the Middle Ages. Her skin was white, with a faint rose tint. Everything about her erred, as it were, by an excess of delicacy.

M. de Montriveau willingly consented to be introduced to the Duchesse de Langeais; and she, after the manner of persons whose sensitive taste leads them to avoid banalities, refrained from overwhelming him with questions and compliments. She received him with a gracious deference which could not fail to flatter a man of more than ordinary powers, for the fact that a man rises above the ordinary level implies that he possesses something of that tact which makes women quick to read feeling. If the Duchess showed any curiosity, it was by her glances; her compliments were conveyed in her manner; there was a winning grace displayed in her words, a subtle suggestion of a desire to please which she of all women knew the art of manifesting. Yet her whole conversation was but, in a manner, the body of the letter; the postscript with the principal thought in it was still to come. After half an hour spent in ordinary talk, in which the words gained all their value from her tone and smiles, M. de Montriveau was about to retire discreetly, when the Duchess stopped him with an expressive gesture.

"I do not know, monsieur, whether these few minutes

during which I have had the pleasure of talking to you proved so sufficiently attractive that I may venture to ask you to call upon me; I am afraid that it may be very selfish of me to wish to have you all to myself. If I should be so fortunate as to find that my house is agreeable to you, you will always find me at home in the evening until ten o'clock."

The invitation was given with such irresistible grace that M. de Montriveau could not refuse to accept it. When he fell back again among the groups of men gathered at a distance from the women, his friends congratulated him, half laughingly, half in earnest, on the extraordinary reception vouchsafed him by the Duchesse de Langeais. The difficult and brilliant conquest had been made beyond a doubt, and the glory of it was reserved for the Artillery of the Guard. It is easy to imagine the jests, good and bad, when this topic had once been started; the world of Paris salons is so eager for amusement, and a joke lasts for such a short time, that every one is eager to make the most of it while it is fresh.

All unconsciously, the General felt flattered by this nonsense. From the place where he had taken his stand, his eyes were drawn again and again to the Duchess by countless wavering reflections. He could not help admitting to himself that, of all the women whose beauty had captivated his eyes, not one had seemed to be a more exquisite embodiment of faults and fair qualities blended in a completeness that might realize the dreams of earliest manhood. Is there a man in any rank of life that has not felt indefinable rapture in his secret soul over the woman singled out (if only in his dreams) to be his own; when she, in body, soul, and social aspects, satisfies his every requirement, a thrice perfect woman? And if this threefold perfection that flatters his pride is no argument for loving her, it is beyond cavil one of the great inducements to the sentiment. Love would soon be convalescent, as the eighteenth century moralist remarked, were it not for vanity. And it is certainly true that for every one, man or woman, there is a wealth of pleasure in the su-

periority of the beloved. Is she set so high by birth that a contemptuous glance can never wound her? is she wealthy enough to surround herself with state which falls nothing short of royalty of kings of finance during their short reign of splendor? is she so ready-witted that a keen-edged jest never brings her into confusion? beautiful enough to rival any woman?—Is it such a small thing to know that your self-love will never suffer through her? A man makes these reflections in the twinkling of an eye. And how if, in the future opened out by early ripened passion, he catches glimpses of the changeful delight of her charm, the frank innocence of a maiden soul, the perils of love's voyage, the thousand folds of the veil of coquetry? Is not this enough to move the coldest man's heart?

This, therefore, was M. de Montriveau's position with regard to woman; his past life in some measure explaining the extraordinary fact. He had been thrown, when little more than a boy, into the hurricane of Napoleon's wars; his life had been spent on fields of battle. Of women he knew just so much as a traveller knows of a country when he travels across it in haste from one inn to another. The verdict which Voltaire passed upon his eighty years of life might, perhaps, have been applied by Montriveau to his own thirty-seven years of existence; had he not thirty-seven follies with which to reproach himself? At his age he was as much a novice in love as the lad that has just been furtively reading "Faublas." Of women he had nothing to learn; of love he knew nothing; and thus, desires, quite unknown before, sprang from this virginity of feeling.

There are men here and there as much engrossed in the work demanded of them by poverty or ambition, art or science, as M. de Montriveau by war and a life of adventure—these know what it is to be in this unusual position if they very seldom confess to it. Every man in Paris is supposed to have been in love. No woman in Paris cares to take what other women have passed over. The dread of being taken for a fool is the source of the coxcomb's brag-

ging so common in France; for in France to have the reputation of a fool is to be a foreigner in one's own country. Vehement desire seized on M. de Montriveau, desire that had gathered strength from the heat of the desert and the first stirrings of a heart unknown as yet in its suppressed turbulence. A strong man, and violent as he was strong, he could keep mastery over himself; but as he talked of indifferent things, he retired within himself, and swore to possess this woman, for through that thought lay the only way to love for him. Desire became a solemn compact made with himself, an oath after the manner of the Arabs among whom he had lived; for among them a vow is a kind of contract made with Destiny, a man's whole future is solemnly pledged to fulfil it, and everything, even his own death, is regarded simply as a means to the one end.

A younger man would have said to himself, "I should very much like to have the Duchess for my mistress!" or, "If the Duchesse de Langeais cared for a man, he would be a very lucky rascal!" But the General said, "I will have Mme. de Langeais for my mistress." And if a man takes such an idea into his head when his heart has never been touched before, and love begins to be a kind of religion with him, he little knows in what a hell he has set his foot.

Armand de Montriveau suddenly took flight and went home in the first hot fever-fit of the first love that he had known. When a man has kept all his boyish beliefs, illusions, frankness, and impetuosity into middle age, his first impulse is, as it were, to stretch out a hand to take the thing that he desires; a little later he realizes that there is a gulf set between them, and that it is all but impossible to cross it. A sort of childish impatience seizes him, he wants the thing the more, and trembles or cries. Wherefore, the next day, after the stormiest reflections that had yet perturbed his mind, Armand de Montriveau discovered that he was under the yoke of the senses, and his bondage made the heavier by his love.

The woman so cavalierly treated in his thoughts of yes-

terday had become a most sacred and dreadful power. She was to be his world, his life, from this time forth. The greatest joy, the keenest anguish, that he had yet known grew colorless before the bare recollection of the least sensation stirred in him by her. The swiftest revolutions in a man's outward life only touch his interests, while passion brings a complete revulsion of feeling. And so in those who live by feeling, rather than by self-interest, the doers rather than the reasoners, the sanguine rather than the lymphatic temperaments, love works a complete revolution. In a flash, with one single reflection, Armand de Montriveau wiped out his whole past life.

A score of times he asked himself, like a boy, "Shall I go, or shall I not?" and then at last he dressed, came to the Hotel de Langeais toward eight o'clock that evening, and was admitted. He was to see the woman—ah! not the woman—the idol that he had seen yesterday, among lights, a fresh innocent girl in gauze and silken lace and veiling. He burst in upon her to declare his love, as if it were a question of firing the first shot on a field of battle.

Poor novice! He found his ethereal sylphide shrouded in a brown cashmere dressing-gown ingeniously befrilled, lying languidly stretched out upon a sofa in a dimly lighted boudoir. Mme. de Langeais did not so much as rise, nothing was visible of her but her face, her hair was loose but confined by a scarf. A hand indicated a seat, a hand that seemed white as marble to Montriveau by the flickering light of a single candle at the further side of the room, and a voice as soft as the light said: "If it had been any one else, M. le Marquis, a friend with whom I could dispense with ceremony, or a mere acquaintance in whom I felt but slight interest, I should have closed my door. I am exceedingly unwell."

"I will go," Armand said to himself.

"But I do not know how it is," she continued (and the simple warrior attributed the shining of her eyes to fever), "perhaps it was a presentiment of your kind visit (and no

one can be more sensible of the prompt attention than I), but the vapors have left my head."

"Then may I stay?"

"Oh, I should be very sorry to allow you to go. I told myself this morning that it was impossible that I should have made the slightest impression on your mind, and that in all probability you took my request for one of the commonplaces of which Parisians are lavish on every occasion. And I forgave your ingratitude in advance. An explorer from the deserts is not supposed to know how exclusive we are in our friendships in the Faubourg."

The gracious, half-murmured words dropped one by one, as if they had been weighted with the gladness that apparently brought them to her lips. The Duchess meant to have the full benefit of her headache, and her speculation was fully successful. The General, poor man, was really distressed by the lady's simulated distress. Like Crillon listening to the story of the Crucifixion, he was ready to draw his sword against the vapors. How could a man dare to speak just then to this suffering woman of the love that she inspired? Armand had already felt that it would be absurd to fire off a declaration of love pointblank at one so far above other women. With a single thought came understanding of the delicacies of feeling, of the soul's requirements. To love: what was that but to know how to plead, to beg for alms, to wait? And as for the love that he felt, must he not prove it? His tongue was mute, it was frozen by the conventions of the noble Faubourg, the majesty of a sick headache, the bashfulness of love. But no power on earth could veil his glances; the heat and the Infinite of the Desert blazed in eyes, calm as a panther's, beneath the lids that fell so seldom. The Duchess enjoyed the steady gaze that enveloped her in light and warmth.

"Mme. la Duchesse," he answered, "I am afraid I express my gratitude for your goodness very badly. At this moment I have but one desire—I wish it were in my power to cure the pain."

"Permit me to throw this off, I feel too warm now," she said, gracefully tossing aside a cushion that covered her feet.

"Madame, in Asia your feet would be worth some ten thousand sequins."

"A traveller's compliment!" smiled she.

It pleased the sprightly lady to involve a rough soldier in a labyrinth of nonsense, commonplaces, and meaningless talk, in which he manœuvred, in military language, as Prince Charles might have done at close quarters with Napoleon. She took a mischievous amusement in reconnoitring the extent of his infatuation by the number of foolish speeches extracted from a novice whom she led step by step into a hopeless maze, meaning to leave him there in confusion. She began by laughing at him, but nevertheless it pleased her to make him forget how time went.

The length of a first visit is frequently a compliment, but Armand was innocent of any such intent. The famous explorer spent an hour in chat on all sorts of subjects, said nothing that he meant to say, and was feeling that he was only an instrument on whom this woman played, when she rose, sat upright, drew the scarf from her hair, and wrapped it about her throat, leaned her elbow on the cushions, did him the honor of a complete cure, and rang for lights. The most graceful movement succeeded to complete repose. She turned to M. de Montriveau, from whom she had just extracted a confidence which seemed to interest her deeply, and said: "You wish to make game of me by trying to make me believe that you have never loved. It is a man's great pretension with us. And we always believe it! Out of pure politeness. Do we not know what to expect from it for ourselves? Where is the man that has found but a single opportunity of losing his heart? But you love to deceive us, and we submit to be deceived, poor foolish creatures that we are; for your hypocrisy is, after all, a homage paid to the superiority of our sentiments, which are all purity."

The last words were spoken with a disdainful pride that made the novice in love feel like a worthless bale flung into

the deep, while the Duchess was an angel soaring back to her particular heaven.

"Confound it!" thought Armand de Montriveau, "how am I to tell this wild thing that I love her?"

He had told her already a score of times; or rather, the Duchess had a score of times read his secret in his eyes; and the passion in this unmistakably great man promised her amusement, and an interest in her empty life. So she prepared with no little dexterity to raise a certain number of redoubts for him to carry by storm before he should gain an entrance into her heart. Montriveau should overleap one difficulty after another; he should be a plaything for her caprice, just as an insect teased by children is made to jump from one finger to another, and in spite of all its pains is kept in the same place by its mischievous tormentor. And yet it gave the Duchess inexpressible happiness to see that this strong man had told her the truth. Armand had never loved, as he had said. He was about to go, in a bad humor with himself, and still more out of humor with her; but it delighted her to see a sullenness that she could conjure away with a word, a glance, or a gesture.

"Will you come to-morrow evening?" she asked. "I am going to a ball, but I shall stay at home for you until ten o'clock."

Montriveau spent most of the next day in smoking an indeterminate quantity of cigars in his study window, and so got through the hours till he could dress and go to the Hotel de Langeais. To any one who had known the magnificent worth of the man, it would have been grievous to see him grown so small, so distrustful of himself; the mind that might have shed light over undiscovered worlds shrunk to the proportions of a she-coxcomb's boudoir. Even he himself felt that he had fallen so low already in his happiness that to save his life he could not have told his love to one of his closest friends. Is there not always a trace of shame in the lover's bashfulness, and perhaps in woman a certain exultation over diminished masculine stature? In-

deed, but for a host of motives of this kind, how explain why women are nearly always the first to betray the secret? —a secret of which, perhaps, they soon weary.

"Mme. la Duchesse cannot see visitors, monsieur," said the man; "she is dressing, she begs you to wait for her here."

Armand walked up and down the drawing-room, studying her taste in the least details. He admired Mme. de Langeais herself in the objects of her choosing; they revealed her life before he could grasp her personality and ideas. About an hour later the Duchess came noiselessly out of her chamber. Montriveau turned, saw her flit like a shadow across the room, and trembled. She came up to him, not with a bourgeoise's inquiry, "How do I look?" She was sure of herself; her steady eyes said plainly, "I am adorned to please you."

No one surely, save the old fairy godmother of some princess in disguise, could have wound a cloud of gauze about the dainty throat, so that the dazzling satin skin beneath should gleam through the gleaming folds. The Duchess was dazzling. The pale blue color of her gown, repeated in the flowers in her hair, appeared by the richness of its hue to lend substance to a fragile form grown too wholly ethereal; for as she glided toward Armand, the loose ends of her scarf floated about her, putting that valiant warrior in mind of the bright damosel flies that hover now over water, now over the flowers with which they seem to mingle and blend.

"I have kept you waiting," she said, with the tone that a woman can always bring into her voice for the man whom she wishes to please.

"I would wait patiently through an eternity," said he, "if I were sure of finding a divinity so fair; but it is no compliment to speak of your beauty to you; nothing save worship could touch you. Suffer me only to kiss your scarf."

"Oh, fie!" she said, with a commanding gesture, "I esteem you enough to give you my hand."

She held it out for his kiss. A woman's hand, still moist from the scented bath, has a soft freshness, a velvet smooth-

ness that sends a tingling thrill from the lips to the soul. And if a man is attracted to a woman, and his senses are as quick to feel pleasure as his heart is full of love, such a kiss, though chaste in appearance, may conjure up a terrific storm.

"Will you always give it me like this?" the General asked humbly, when he had pressed that dangerous hand respectfully to his lips.

"Yes, but there we must stop," she said, smiling. She sat down, and seemed very slow over putting on her gloves, trying to slip the unstretched kid over all her fingers at once, while she watched M. de Montriveau; and he was lost in admiration of the Duchess and those repeated graceful movements of hers.

"Ah! you were punctual," she said; "that is right. I like punctuality. It is the courtesy of kings, his Majesty says; but to my thinking, from you men it is the most respectful flattery of all. Now, is it not? Just tell me."

Again she gave him a side glance to express her insidious friendship, for he was dumb with happiness—sheer happiness through such nothings as these! Oh, the Duchess understood *son métier de femme*—the art and mystery of being a woman—most marvellously well; she knew, to admiration, how to raise a man in his own esteem as he humbled himself to her; how to reward every step of the descent to sentimental folly with hollow flatteries.

"You will never forget to come at nine o'clock."

"No; but are you going to a ball every night?"

"Do I know?" she answered, with a little childlike shrug of the shoulders; the gesture was meant to say that she was nothing if not capricious, and that a lover must take her as she was.—"Besides," she added, "what is that to you? You shall be my escort."

"That would be difficult to-night," he objected; "I am not properly dressed."

"It seems to me," she returned loftily, "that if any one has a right to complain of your costume, it is I. Know,

therefore, *monsieuv le voyageur*, that if I accept a man's arm, he is forthwith above the laws of fashion, nobody would venture to criticise him. You do not know the world, I see; I like you the better for it."

And even as she spoke she swept him into the pettiness of that world by the attempt to initiate him into the vanities of a woman of fashion.

"If she chooses to do a foolish thing for me, I should be a simpleton to prevent her," said Armand to himself. "She has a liking for me beyond a doubt; and as for the world, she cannot despise it more than I do. So, now for the ball if she likes."

The Duchess probably thought that if the General came with her and appeared in a ballroom in boots and a black tie, nobody would hesitate to believe that he was violently in love with her. And the General was well pleased that the queen of fashion should think of compromising herself for him; hope gave him wit. He had gained confidence, he brought out his thoughts and views; he felt nothing of the restraint that weighed on his spirits yesterday. His talk was interesting and animated, and full of those first confidences so sweet to make and to receive.

Was Mme. de Langeais really carried away by his talk, or had she devised this charming piece of coquetry? At any rate, she looked up mischievously as the clock struck twelve.

"Ah! you have made me too late for the ball!" she exclaimed, surprised and vexed that she had forgotten how time was going.

The next moment she approved the exchange of pleasures with a smile that made Armand's heart give a sudden leap.

"I certainly promised Mme. de Beauséant," she added. "They are all expecting me."

"Very well—go."

"No—go on. I will stay. Your Eastern adventures fascinate me. Tell me the whole story of your life. I

love to share in a brave man's hardships, and I feel them all, indeed I do!"

She was playing with her scarf, twisting it and pulling it to pieces, with jerky, impatient movements that seemed to tell of inward dissatisfaction and deep reflection.

"*We* are fit for nothing," she went on. "Ah! we are contemptible, selfish, frivolous creatures. We can bore ourselves with amusements, and that is all we can do. Not one of us that understands that she has a part to play in life. In old days in France, women were beneficent lights; they lived to comfort those that mourned, to encourage high virtues, to reward artists and stir new life with noble thoughts. If the world has grown so petty, ours is the fault. You make me loathe the ball and this world in which I live. No, I am not giving up much for you."

She had plucked her scarf to pieces, as a child plays with a flower, pulling away all the petals one by one; and now she crushed it into a ball, and flung it away. She could show her swan's neck.

She rang the bell. "I shall not go out to-night," she told the footman. Her long, blue eyes turned timidly to Armand; and by the look of misgiving in them, he knew that he was meant to take the order for a confession, for a first and great favor. There was a pause, filled with many thoughts, before she spoke with that tenderness which is often in women's voices, and not so often in their hearts. "You have had a hard life," she said.

"No," returned Armand. "Until to-day I did not know what happiness was."

"Then you know it now?" she asked, looking at him with a demure, keen glance.

"What is happiness for me henceforth but this—to see you, to hear you? . . . Until now I have only known privation; now I know that I can be unhappy—"

"That will do, that will do," she said. "You must go; it is past midnight. Let us regard appearances. People

must not talk about us. I do not know quite what I shall say; but the headache is a good-natured friend, and tells no tales."

"Is there to be a ball to-morrow night?"

"You would grow accustomed to the life, I think. Very well. Yes, we will go again to-morrow night."

There was not a happier man in the world than Armand when he went out from her. Every evening he came to Mme. de Langeais's at the hour kept for him by a tacit understanding.

It would be tedious, and, for the many young men who carry a redundance of such sweet memories in their hearts, it were superfluous to follow the story step by step—the progress of a romance growing in those hours spent together, a romance controlled entirely by a woman's will. If sentiment went too fast, she would raise a quarrel over a word, or when words flagged behind her thoughts, she appealed to the feelings. Perhaps the only way of following such Penelope's progress is by marking its outward and visible signs.

As, for instance, within a few days of their first meeting, the assiduous General had won and kept the right to kiss his lady's insatiable hands. Wherever Mme. de Langeais went, M. de Montriveau was certain to be seen, till people jokingly called him "Her Grace's orderly." And already he had made enemies; others were jealous, and envied him his position. Mme. de Langeais had attained her end. The Marquis de Montriveau was among her numerous train of adorers, and a means of humiliating those who boasted of their progress in her good graces, for she publicly gave him preference over them all.

"Decidedly, M. de Montriveau is the man for whom the Duchess shows a preference," pronounced Mme. de Sérizy.

And who in Paris does not know what it means when a woman "shows a preference"? All went on therefore according to prescribed rule. The anecdotes which people were pleased to circulate concerning the General put that

warrior in so formidable a light that the more adroit quietly dropped their pretensions to the Duchess, and remained in her train merely to turn the position to account, and to use her name and personality to make better terms for themselves with certain stars of the second magnitude. And those lesser powers were delighted to take a lover away from Mme. de Langeais. The Duchess was keen-sighted enough to see these desertions and treaties with the enemy; and her pride would not suffer her to be the dupe of them. As M. de Talleyrand, one of her great admirers, said, she knew how to take a second edition of revenge, laying the two-edged blade of a sarcasm between the pairs in these "morganatic" unions. Her mocking disdain contributed not a little to increase her reputation as an extremely clever woman and a person to be feared. Her character for virtue was consolidated while she amused herself with other people's secrets, and kept her own to herself. Yet, after two months of assiduities, she saw with a vague dread in the depths of her soul that M. de Montriveau understood nothing of the subtleties of flirtation after the manner of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; he was taking a Parisienne's coquetry in earnest.

"You will not tame *him*, dear Duchess," the old Vidame de Pamiers had said. "'Tis a first cousin to the eagle; he will carry you off to his eyrie if you do not take care."

Then Mme. de Langeais felt afraid. The shrewd old noble's words sounded like a prophecy. The next day she tried to turn love to hate. She was harsh, exacting, irritable, unbearable; Montriveau disarmed her with angelic sweetness. She so little knew the great generosity of a large nature, that the kindly jests with which her first complaints were met went to her heart. She sought a quarrel, and found proofs of affection. She persisted.

"When a man idolizes you, how can he have vexed you?" asked Armand.

"You do not vex me," she answered, suddenly grown gentle and submissive. "But why do you wish to com-

promise me? For me you ought to be nothing but a *friend.* Do you not know it? I wish I could see that you had the instincts, the delicacy of real friendship, so that I might lose neither your respect nor the pleasure that your presence gives me."

"Nothing but your *friend!*" he cried out. The terrible word sent an electric shock through his brain. "On the faith of these happy hours that you grant me, I sleep and wake in your heart. And now to-day, for no reason, you are pleased to destroy all the secret hopes by which I live. You have required promises of such constancy in me, you have said so much of your horror of women made up of nothing but caprice; and now do you wish me to understand that, like other women here in Paris, you have passions, and know nothing of love? If so, why did you ask my life of me? why did you accept it?"

"I was wrong, my friend. Oh, it is wrong of a woman to yield to such intoxication when she must not and cannot make any return."

"I understand. You have merely been coquetting with me, and—"

"Coquetting?" she repeated. "I detest coquetry. A coquette, Armand, makes promises to many, and gives herself to none; and a woman who keeps such promises is a libertine. This much I believed I had grasped of our code. But to be melancholy with humorists, gay with the frivolous, and politic with ambitious souls; to listen to a babbler with every appearance of admiration, to talk of war with a soldier, wax enthusiastic with philanthropists over the good of the nation, and to give to each one his little dole of flattery—it seems to me that this is as much a matter of necessity as dress, diamonds, and gloves, or flowers in one's hair. Such talk is the moral counterpart of the toilet. You take it up and lay it aside with the plumed headdress. Do you call this coquetry? Why, I have never treated you as I treat every one else. With you, my friend, I am sincere. Have I not always shared

your views, and when you convinced me after a discussion, was I not always perfectly glad? In short, I love you, but only as a devout and pure woman may love. I have thought it over. I am a married woman, Armand. My way of life with M. de Langeais gives me liberty to bestow my heart; but law and custom leave me no right to dispose of my person. If a woman loses her honor, she is an outcast in any rank of life; and I have yet to meet with a single example of a man that realizes all that our sacrifices demand of him in such a case. Quite otherwise. Any one can foresee the rupture between Mme. de Beauséant and M. d'Ajuda (for he is going to marry Mlle. de Rochefide, it seems), that affair made it clear to my mind that these very sacrifices on the woman's part are almost always the cause of the man's desertion. If you had loved me sincerely, you would have kept away for a time.—Now, I will lay aside all vanity for you; is not that something? What will not people say of a woman to whom no man attaches himself? Oh, she is heartless, brainless, soulless; and what is more, devoid of charm! Coquettes will not spare me. They will rob me of the very qualities that mortify them. So long as my reputation is safe, what do I care if my rivals deny my merits? They certainly will not inherit them. Come, my friend; give up something for her who sacrifices so much for you. Do not come quite so often; I shall love you none the less."

"Ah!" said Armand, with the profound irony of a wounded heart in his words and tone. "Love, so the scribblers say, only feeds on illusions. Nothing could be truer, I see; I am expected to imagine that I am loved. But, there!—there are some thoughts like wounds, from which there is no recovery. My belief in you was one of the last left to me, and now I see that there is nothing left to believe in this earth."

She began to smile.

"Yes," Montriveau went on in an unsteady voice, "this Catholic faith to which you wish to convert me is a lie that

men make for themselves; hope is a lie at the expense of the future; pride, a lie between us and our fellows; and pity, and prudence, and terror are cunning lies. And now my happiness is to be one more lying delusion; I am expected to delude myself, to be willing to give gold coin for silver to the end. If you can so easily dispense with my visits; if you can confess me neither as your friend nor your lover, you do not care for me! And I, poor fool that I am, tell myself this, and know it, and love you!"

"But, dear me, poor Armand, you are flying into a passion!"

"I flying into a passion?"

"Yes. You think that the whole question is opened because I ask you to be careful."

In her heart of hearts she was delighted with the anger that leaped out in her lover's eyes. Even as she tortured him, she was criticising him, watching every slightest change that passed over his face. If the General had been so unluckily inspired as to show himself generous without discussion (as happens occasionally with some artless souls), he would have been a banished man forever, accused and convicted of not knowing how to love. Most women are not displeased to have their code of right and wrong broken through. Do they not flatter themselves that they never yield except by force? But Armand was not learned enough in this kind of lore to see the snare ingeniously spread for him by the Duchess. So much of the child was there in the strong man in love.

"If all you want is to preserve appearances," he began in his simplicity, "I am willing to—"

"Simply to preserve appearances!" the lady broke in; "why, what idea can you have of me? Have I given you the slightest reason to suppose that I can be yours?"

"Why, what else are we talking about?" demanded Montriveau.

"Monsieur, you frighten me! . . . No, pardon me. Thank you," she added, coldly; "thank you, Armand.

You have given me timely warning of imprudence; committed quite unconsciously, believe it, my friend. You know how to endure, you say. I also know how to endure. We will not see each other for a time; and then, when both of us have contrived to recover calmness to some extent, we will think about arrangements for a happiness sanctioned by the world. I am young, Armand; a man with no delicacy might tempt a woman of four-and-twenty to do many foolish, wild things for his sake. But *you!* You will be my friend, promise me that you will?"

"The woman of four-and-twenty," returned he, "knows what she is about."

He sat down on the sofa in the boudoir and leaned his head on his hands.

"Do you love me, madame?" he asked at length, raising his head, and turning a face full of resolution upon her. "Say it straight out; Yes or No!"

His direct question dismayed the Duchess more than a threat of suicide could have done; indeed, the woman of the nineteenth century is not to be frightened by that stale stratagem, the sword has ceased to be a part of the masculine costume. But in the effect of eyelids and lashes, in the contraction of the gaze, in the twitching of the lips, is there not some influence that communicates the terror which they express with such vivid magnetic power?

"Ah, if I were free, if—"

"Oh! is it only your husband that stands in the way?" the General exclaimed joyfully, as he strode to and fro in the boudoir. "Dear Antoinette, I wield a more absolute power than the Autocrat of all the Russias. I have a compact with Fate; I can advance or retard destiny, so far as men are concerned, at my fancy, as you alter the hands of a watch. If you can direct the course of fate in our political machinery, it simply means (does it not?) that you understand the ins and outs of it. You shall be free before very long, and then you must remember your promise."

"Armand!" she cried. "What do you mean? Great

heavens! Can you imagine that I am to be the prize of a crime? Do you want to kill me? Why! you cannot have any religion in you! For my own part, I fear God. M. de Langeais may have given me reason to hate him, but I wish him no manner of harm."

M. de Montriveau beat a tattoo on the marble chimney-piece, and only looked composedly at the lady.

"Dear," continued she, "respect him. He does not love me, he is not kind to me, but I have duties to fulfil with regard to him. What would I not do to avert the calamities with which you threaten him? Listen," she continued after a pause, "I will not say another word about separation; you shall come here as in the past, and I will still give you my forehead to kiss. If I refused once or twice, it was pure coquetry, indeed it was. But let us understand each other," she added as he came closer. "You will permit me to add to the number of my satellites; to receive even more visitors in the morning than heretofore; I mean to be twice as frivolous; I mean to use you to all appearance very badly; to feign a rupture; you must come not quite so often, and then, afterward—"

While she spoke, she had allowed him to put an arm about her waist, Montriveau was holding her tightly to him, and she seemed to feel the exceeding pleasure that women usually feel in that close contact, an earnest of the bliss of a closer union. And then, doubtless she meant to elicit some confidence, for she raised herself on tiptoe, and laid her forehead against Armand's burning lips.

"And then," Montriveau finished her sentence for her, "you shall not speak to me of your husband. You ought not to think of him again."

Mme. de Langeais was silent awhile.

"At least," she said, after a significant pause, "at least you will do all that I wish without grumbling, you will not be naughty; tell me so, my friend? You wanted to frighten me, did you not? Come, now, confess it? . . . You are too good ever to think of crimes. But is it possible that you

can have secrets that I do not know? How can you control Fate?"

"Now, when you confirm the gift of the heart that you have already given me, I am far too happy to know exactly how to answer you. I can trust you, Antoinette; I shall have no suspicion, no unfounded jealousy of you. But if accident should set you free, we shall be one—"

"Accident, Armand?" (with that little dainty turn of the head that seems to say so many things, a gesture that such women as the Duchess can use on light occasions, as a great singer can act with her voice). "Pure accident," she repeated. "Mind that. If anything should happen to M. de Langeais by your fault, I should never be yours."

And so they parted, mutually content. The Duchess had made a pact that left her free to prove to the world by words and deeds that M. de Montriveau was no lover of hers. And as for him, the wily Duchess vowed to tire him out. He should have nothing of her beyond the little concessions snatched in the course of contests that she could stop at her pleasure. She had so pretty an art of revoking the grant of yesterday, she was so much in earnest in her purpose to remain technically virtuous, that she felt that there was not the slightest danger for her in preliminaries fraught with peril for a woman less sure of her self-command. After all, the Duchess was practically separated from her husband; a marriage long since annulled was no great sacrifice to make to her love.

Montriveau on his side was quite happy to win the vaguest promise, glad once for all to sweep aside, with all scruples of conjugal fidelity, her stock of excuses for refusing herself to his love. He had gained ground a little, and congratulated himself. And so for a time he took unfair advantage of the rights so hardly won. More a boy than he had ever been in his life, he gave himself up to all the childishness that makes first love the flower of life. He was a child again as he poured out all his soul, all the thwarted forces that passion had given him, upon her hands, upon the dazzling forehead

that looked so pure to his eyes; upon her fair hair; on the tufted curls where his lips were pressed. And the Duchess, on whom his love was poured like a flood, was vanquished by the magnetic influence of her lover's warmth; she hesitated to begin the quarrel that must part them forever. She was more a woman than she thought, this slight creature, in her effort to reconcile the demands of religion with the ever-new sensations of vanity, the semblance of pleasure which turns a Parisienne's head. Every Sunday she went to Mass; she never missed a service; then, when evening came, she was steeped in the intoxicating bliss of repressed desire. Armand and Mme. de Langeais, like Hindoo fakirs, found the reward of their continence in the temptations to which it gave rise. Possibly, the Duchess had ended by resolving love into fraternal caresses, harmless enough, as it might have seemed to the rest of the world, while they borrowed extremes of degradation from the license of her thoughts. How else explain the incomprehensible mystery of her continual fluctuations? Every morning she proposed to herself to shut her door on the Marquis de Montriveau; every evening, at the appointed hour, she fell under the charm of his presence. There was a languid defence; then she grew less unkind. Her words were sweet and soothing. They were lovers—lovers only could have been thus. For him the Duchess would display her most sparkling wit, her most captivating wiles; and when at last she had wrought upon his senses and his soul, she might submit herself passively to his fierce caresses, but she had her *ne plus ultra* of passion; and when once it was reached, she grew angry if he lost the mastery of himself and made as though he would pass beyond. No woman on earth can brave the consequences of refusal without some motive; nothing is more natural than to yield to love; wherefore Mme. de Langeais promptly raised a second line of fortification, a stronghold less easy to carry than the first. She evoked the terrors of religion. Never did Father of the Church, however eloquent, plead the cause of God better than the Duchess. Never was the wrath of the Most

High better justified than by her voice. She used no preacher's commonplaces, no rhetorical amplifications. No. She had a "pulpit-tremor" of her own. To Armand's most passionate entreaty, she replied with a tearful gaze, and a gesture in which a terrible plenitude of emotion found expression. She stopped his mouth with an appeal for mercy. She would not hear another word; if she did, she must succumb; and better death than criminal happiness.

"Is it nothing to disobey God?" she asked him, recovering a voice grown faint in the crisis of inward struggles, through which the fair actress appeared to find it hard to preserve her self-control. "I would sacrifice society, I would give up the whole world for you, gladly; but it is very selfish of you to ask my whole after-life of me for a moment of pleasure. Come, now! are you not happy?" she added, holding out her hand; and certainly in her careless toilet the sight of her afforded consolations to her lover, who made the most of them.

Sometimes from policy, to keep her hold on a man whose ardent passion gave her emotions unknown before, sometimes in weakness, she suffered him to snatch a swift kiss; and immediately, in feigned terror, she flushed red and exiled Armand from the sofa so soon as the sofa became dangerous ground.

"Your joys are sins for me to expiate, Armand; they are paid for by penitence and remorse," she cried.

And Montriveau, now at two chairs' distance from that aristocratic petticoat, betook himself to blasphemy and railed against Providence. The Duchess grew angry at such times.

"My friend," she said dryly, "I do not understand why you decline to believe in God, for it is impossible to believe in man. Hush, do not talk like that. You have too great a nature to take up their Liberal nonsense with its pretension to abolish God."

Theological and political disputes acted like a cold douche on Montriveau; he calmed down; he could not return to love when the Duchess stirred up his wrath by suddenly setting

him down a thousand miles away from the boudoir, discussing theories of absolute monarchy, which she defended to admiration. Few women venture to be democrats; the attitude of democratic champion is scarcely compatible with tyrannous feminine sway. But often, on the other hand, the General shook out his mane, dropped politics with a leonine growling and lashing of the flanks, and sprang upon his prey; he was no longer capable of carrying a heart and brain at such variance for very far; he came back, terrible with love, to his mistress. And she, if she felt the prick of fancy stimulated to a dangerous point, knew that it was time to leave her boudoir; she came out of the atmosphere surcharged with desires that she drew in with her breath, sat down to the piano, and sang the most exquisite songs of modern music, and so baffled the physical attraction which at times showed her no mercy, though she was strong enough to fight it down.

At such times she was something sublime in Armand's eyes; she was not acting, she was genuine; the unhappy lover was convinced that she loved him. Her egoistic resistance deluded him into a belief that she was a pure and sainted woman; he resigned himself; he talked of Platonic love, did this artillery officer!

When Mme. de Langeais had played with religion sufficiently to suit her own purposes, she played with it again for Armand's benefit. She wanted to bring him back to a Christian frame of mind; she brought out her edition of "Le Génie du Christianisme," adapted for the use of military men. Montriveau chafed; his yoke was heavy. Oh! at that, possessed by the spirit of contradiction, she dinned religion into his ears, to see whether God might not rid her of this suitor, for the man's persistence was beginning to frighten her. And in any case she was glad to prolong any quarrel, if it bade fair to keep the dispute on moral grounds for an indefinite period; the material struggle which followed it was more dangerous.

But if the time of her opposition on the ground of the

marriage law might be said to be the *époque civile* of this sentimental warfare, the ensuing phase which might be taken to constitute the *époque religieuse* had also its crisis and consequent decline of severity.

Armand happening to come in very early one evening, found M. l'Abbé Gondrand, the Duchess's spiritual director, established in an armchair by the fireside, looking as a spiritual director might be expected to look while digesting his dinner and the charming sins of his penitent. In the ecclesiastic's bearing there was a stateliness befitting a dignitary of the Church; and the episcopal violet hue already appeared in his dress. At sight of his fresh, well-preserved complexion, smooth forehead, and ascetic's mouth, Montriveau's countenance grew uncommonly dark; he said not a word under the malicious scrutiny of the other's gaze, and greeted neither the lady nor the priest. The lover apart, Montriveau was not wanting in tact; so a few glances exchanged with the bishop-designate told him that here was the real forger of the Duchess's armory of scruples.

That an ambitious abbé should control the happiness of a man of Montriveau's temper, and by underhand ways! The thought burst in a furious tide over his face, clinched his fists, and set him chafing and pacing to and fro; but when he came back to his place intending to make a scene, a single look from the Duchess was enough. He was quiet.

Any other woman would have been put out by her lover's gloomy silence; it was quite otherwise with Mme. de Langeais. She continued her conversation with M. de Gondrand on the necessity of re-establishing the Church in its ancient splendor. And she talked brilliantly. The Church, she maintained, ought to be a temporal as well as a spiritual power, stating her case better than the Abbé had done, and regretting that the Chamber of Peers, unlike the English House of Lords, had no bench of bishops. Nevertheless, the Abbé rose, yielded his place to the General, and took his leave, knowing that in Lent he could play a return game. As for the Duchess, Montriveau's behavior had excited her

curiosity to such a pitch that she scarcely rose to return her director's low bow.

"What is the matter with you, my friend?"

"Why, I cannot stomach that Abbé of yours."

"Why did you not take a book?" she asked, careless whether the Abbé, then closing the door, heard her or no.

The General paused, for the gesture which accompanied the Duchess's speech further increased the exceeding insolence of her words.

"My dear Antoinette, thank you for giving love precedence of the Church; but, for pity's sake, allow me to ask one question."

"Oh! you are questioning me! I am quite willing. You are my friend, are you not? I certainly can open the bottom of my heart to you; you will see only one image there."

"Do you talk about our love to that man?"

"He is my confessor."

"Does he know that I love you?"

"M. de Montriveau, you cannot claim, I think, to penetrate the secrets of the confessional?"

"Does that man know all about our quarrels and my love for you—?"

"That man, monsieur; say God!"

"God again! *I* ought to be alone in your heart. But leave God alone where He is, for the love of God and me. Madame, you *shall not* go to confession again, or—"

"Or?" she repeated sweetly.

"Or I will never come back here."

"Then go, Armand. Good-by, good-by forever."

She rose and went to her boudoir without so much as a glance at Armand, as he stood with his hand on the back of a chair. How long he stood there motionless he himself never knew. The soul within has the mysterious power of expanding as of contracting space.

He opened the door of the boudoir. It was dark within. A faint voice was raised to say sharply: "I did not ring. What made you come in without orders? Go away, Suzette."

"Then you are ill," exclaimed Montriveau.

"Stand up, monsieur, and go out of the room for a minute at any rate," she said, ringing the bell.

"Mme. la Duchesse rang for lights?" said the footman, coming in with the candles. When the lovers were alone together, Mme. de Langeais still lay on her couch; she was just as silent and motionless as if Montriveau had not been there.

"Dear, I was wrong," he began, a note of pain and a sublime kindness in his voice. "Indeed, I would not have you without religion—"

"It is fortunate that you can recognize the necessity of a conscience," she said in a hard voice, without looking at him. "I thank you in God's name."

The General was broken down by her harshness; this woman seemed as if she could be at will a sister or a stranger to him. He made one despairing stride toward the door. He would leave her forever without another word. He was wretched; and the Duchess was laughing within herself over mental anguish far more cruel than the old judicial torture. But as for going away, it was not in his power to do it. In any sort of crisis, a woman is, as it were, bursting with a certain quantity of things to say; so long as she has not delivered herself of them, she experiences the sensation which we are apt to feel at the sight of something incomplete. Mme. de Langeais had not said all that was in her mind. She took up her parable and said: "We have not the same convictions, General, I am pained to think. It would be dreadful if a woman could not believe in a religion which permits us to love beyond the grave. I set Christian sentiments aside; you cannot understand them. Let me simply speak to you of expediency. Would you forbid a woman at court the table of the Lord when it is customary to take the sacrament at Easter? People must certainly do something for their party. The Liberals, whatever they may wish to do, will never destroy the religious instinct. Religion will always be a political necessity. Would you

undertake to govern a nation of logic-choppers? Napoleon was afraid to try; he persecuted ideologists. If you want to keep people from reasoning, you must give them something to feel. So let us accept the Roman Catholic Church with all its consequences. And if we would have France go to mass, ought we not to begin by going ourselves? Religion, you see, Armand, is a bond uniting all the conservative principles which enable the rich to live in tranquillity. Religion and the rights of property are intimately connected. It is certainly a finer thing to lead a nation by ideas of morality than by fear of the scaffold, as in the time of the Terror —the one method by which your odious Revolution could enforce obedience. The priest and the king—that means you, and me, and the Princess my neighbor; and, in a word, the interests of all honest people personified. There, my friend, just be so good as to belong to your party, you that might be its Sylla if you had the slightest ambition that way. I know nothing about politics myself; I argue from my own feelings; but still I know enough to guess that society would be overturned if people were always calling its foundations in question—"

"If that is how your Court and your Government think, I am sorry for you," broke in Montriveau. "The Restoration, madame, ought to say, like Catherine de Medici, when she heard that the battle of Dreux was lost, 'Very well; now we will go to the meeting-house.' Now 1815 was your battle of Dreux. Like the royal power of those days, you won in fact, while you lost in right. Political Protestantism has gained an ascendency over people's minds. If you have no mind to issue your Edict of Nantes; or if, when it is issued, you publish a Revocation; if you should one day be accused and convicted of repudiating the Charter, which is simply a pledge given to maintain the interests established under the Republic, then the Revolution will rise again, terrible in her strength, and strike but a single blow. It will not be the Revolution that will go into exile; she is the very soil of France. Men die, but people's interests do not die. . . .

Eh, great Heavens! what are France and the crown and rightful sovereigns, and the whole world besides, to us? Idle words compared with my happiness. Let them reign or be hurled from the throne, little do I care. Where am I now?"

"In the Duchesse de Langeais's boudoir, my friend."

"No, no. No more of the Duchess, no more of Langeais; I am with my dear Antoinette."

"Will you do me the pleasure to stay where you are?" she said, laughing and pushing him back, gently, however.

"So you have never loved me," he retorted, and anger flashed in lightning from his eyes.

"No, dear;" but the "No" was equivalent to "Yes."

"I am a great ass," he said, kissing her hands. The terrible queen was a woman once more.—"Antoinette," he went on, laying his head on her feet, "you are too chastely tender to speak of our happiness to any one in this world."

"Oh!" she cried, rising to her feet with a swift, graceful spring, "you are a great simpleton." And without another word she fled into the drawing-room.

"What is it now?" wondered the General, little knowing that the touch of his burning forehead had sent a swift electric thrill through her from foot to head.

In hot wrath he followed her to the drawing-room, only to hear divinely sweet chords. The Duchess was at the piano. If the man of science or the poet can at once enjoy and comprehend, bringing his intelligence to bear upon his enjoyment without loss of delight, he is conscious that the alphabet and phraseology of music are but cunning instruments for the composer, like the wood and copper wire under the hands of the executant. For the poet and the man of science there is a music existing apart, underlying the double expression of this language of the spirit and senses. "Andiamo mio ben" can draw tears of joy or pitying laughter at the will of the singer; and not infrequently one here and there in the world, some girl unable to live and bear the heavy burden of an unguessed pain, some man whose soul

vibrates with the throb of passion, may take up a musical theme, and lo! heaven is opened for them, or they find a language for themselves in some sublime melody, some song lost to the world.

The General was listening now to such a song; a mysterious music unknown to all other ears, as the solitary plaint of some mateless bird dying alone in a virgin forest.

"Great Heavens! what are you playing there?" he asked in an unsteady voice.

"The prelude of a ballad, called, I believe, 'Fleuve du Tage.'"

"I did not know that there was such music in a piano," he returned.

"Ah!" she said, and for the first time she looked at him as a woman looks at the man she loves, "nor do you know, my friend, that I love you, and that you cause me horrible suffering; and that I feel that I must utter my cry of pain without putting it too plainly into words. If I did not, I should yield— But you see nothing."

"And you will not make me happy."

"Armand, I should die of sorrow the next day."

The General turned abruptly from her and went. But out in the street he brushed away the tears that he would not let fall.

The religious phase lasted for three months. At the end of that time the Duchess grew weary of vain repetitions; the Deity, bound hand and foot, was delivered up to her lover. Possibly she may have feared that by sheer dint of talking of eternity she might perpetuate his love in this world and the next. For her own sake, it must be believed that no man had touched her heart, or her conduct would be inexcusable. She was young; the time when men and women feel that they cannot afford to lose time or to quibble over their joys was still far off. She, no doubt, was on the verge not of first love, but of her first experience of the bliss of love. And from inexperience, for want of the painful lessons which would have taught her to value the treasure

poured out at her feet, she was playing with it. Knowing nothing of the glory and rapture of the light, she was fain to stay in the shadow.

Armand was just beginning to understand this strange situation; he put his hope in the first word spoken by nature. Every evening, as he came away from Mme. de Langeais's, he told himself that no woman would accept the tenderest, most delicate proofs of a man's love during seven months, nor yield passively to the slighter demands of passion, only to cheat love at the last. He was waiting patiently for the sun to gain power, not doubting but that he should receive the earliest fruits. The married woman's hesitations and the religious scruples he could quite well understand. He even rejoiced over those battles. He mistook the Duchess's heartless coquetry for modesty; and he would not have had her otherwise. So he had loved to see her devising obstacles; was he not gradually triumphing over them? Did not every victory won swell the meagre sum of lovers' intimacies long denied, and at last conceded with every sign of love? Still, he had had such leisure to taste the full sweetness of every small successive conquest on which a lover feeds his love that these had come to be matters of use and wont. So far as obstacles went, there were none now save his own awe of her; nothing else left between him and his desire save the whims of her who allowed him to call her Antoinette. So he made up his mind to demand more, to demand all. Embarrassed like a young lover who cannot dare to believe that his idol can stoop so low, he hesitated for a long time. He passed through the experience of terrible reactions within himself. A set purpose was annihilated by a word, and definite resolves died within him on the threshold. He despised himself for his weakness, and still his desire remained unuttered.

Nevertheless, one evening, after sitting in gloomy melancholy, he brought out a fierce demand for his illegally legitimate rights. The Duchess had not to wait for her bond-slave's request to guess his desire. When was a man's

desire a secret? And have not women an intuitive knowledge of the meaning of certain changes of countenance?

"What! you wish to be my friend no longer?" she broke in at the first words, and a divine red surging like new blood under the transparent skin lent brightness to her eyes. "As a reward for my generosity you would dishonor me? Just reflect a little. I myself have thought much over this; and I think always for us *both*. There is such a thing as a woman's loyalty, and we can no more fail in it than you can fail in honor. *I* cannot blind myself. If I am yours, how, in any sense, can I be M. de Langeais's wife? Can you require the sacrifice of my position, my rank, my whole life in return for a doubtful love that could not wait patiently for seven months? What! already you would rob me of my right to dispose of myself? No, no; you must not talk like this again. No, not another word. I will not, I cannot listen to you."

Mme. de Langeais raised both hands to her head to push back the tufted curls from her hot forehead; she seemed very much excited.

"You come to a weak woman with your purpose definitely planned out. You say—'For a certain length of time she will talk to me of her husband, then of God, and then of the inevitable consequences. But I will use and abuse the ascendency I shall gain over her; I will make myself indispensable; all the bonds of habit, all the misconstructions of outsiders, will make for me; and at length, when our *liaison* is taken for granted by all the world, I shall be this woman's master.'—Now, be frank; these are your thoughts! Oh! you calculate, and you say that you love. Shame on you! You are enamored? Ah! that I well believe! You wish to possess me, to have me for your mistress, that is all! Very well then, No! The *Duchesse de Langeais* will not descend so far. Simple *bourgeoises* may be the victims of your treachery — I, never! Nothing gives me assurance of your love. You speak of my beauty; I may lose every trace of it in six

months, like the dear Princess, my neighbor. You are captivated by my wit, my grace. Great Heavens! you would soon grow used to them and to the pleasures of possession. Have not the little concessions that I was weak enough to make come to be a matter of course in the last few months? Some day, when ruin comes, you will give me no reason for the change in you beyond a curt, 'I have ceased to care for you.'—Then, rank and fortune and honor and all that was the Duchesse de Langeais will be swallowed up in one disappointed hope. I shall have children to bear witness to my shame, and—" With an involuntary gesture she interrupted herself, and continued: "But I am too good-natured to explain all this to you when you know it better than I. Come! let us stay as we are. I am only too fortunate in that I can still break these bonds which you think so strong. Is there anything so very heroic in coming to the Hotel de Langeais to spend an evening with a woman whose prattle amuses you?—a woman whom you take for a plaything? Why, half-a-dozen young coxcombs come here just as regularly every afternoon between three and five. They, too, are very generous, I am to suppose? I make fun of them; they stand my petulance and insolence pretty quietly, and make me laugh; but as for you, I give all the treasures of my soul to you, and you wish to ruin me, you try my patience in endless ways. Hush, that will do, that will do," she continued, seeing that he was about to speak, "you have no heart, no soul, no delicacy. I know what you want to tell me. Very well, then—yes. I would rather you should take me for a cold, insensible woman, with no devotion in her composition, no heart even, than be taken by everybody else for a vulgar person, and be condemned to your so-called pleasures, of which you would most certainly tire, and to everlasting punishment for it afterward. Your selfish love is not worth so many sacrifices . . ."

The words give but a very inadequate idea of the discourse which the Duchess trilled out with the quick volu-

bility of a bird-organ. Nor, truly, was there anything to prevent her from talking on for some time to come, for poor Armand's only reply to the torrent of flute notes was a silence filled with cruelly painful thoughts. He was just beginning to see that this woman was playing with him; he divined instinctively that a devoted love, a responsive love, does not reason and count the consequences in this way. Then, as he heard her reproach him with detestable motives, he felt something like shame as he remembered that unconsciously he had made those very calculations. With angelic honesty of purpose, he looked within, and self-examination found nothing but selfishness in all his thoughts and motives, in the answers which he framed and could not utter. He was self-convicted. In his despair he longed to fling himself from the window. The egoism of it was intolerable.

What indeed can a man say when a woman will not believe in love?—Let me prove how much I love you.—The *I* is always there.

The heroes of the boudoir, in such circumstances, can follow the example of the primitive logician who preceded the Pyrrhonists and denied movement. Montriveau was not equal to this feat. With all his audacity, he lacked this precise kind which never deserts an adept in the formulas of feminine algebra. If so many women, and even the best of women, fall a prey to a kind of expert to whom the vulgar give a grosser name, it is perhaps because the said experts are great *provers*, and love, in spite of its delicious poetry of sentiment, requires a little more geometry than people are wont to think.

Now the Duchess and Montriveau were alike in this—they were both equally unversed in love lore. The lady's knowledge of theory was but scanty; in practice she knew nothing whatever; she felt nothing, and reflected over everything. Montriveau had had but little experience, was absolutely ignorant of theory, and felt too much to reflect at all. Both therefore were enduring the conse-

quences of the singular situation. At that supreme moment the myriad thoughts in his mind might have been reduced to the formula—"Submit to be mine—" words which seem horribly selfish to a woman for whom they awaken no memories, recall no ideas. Something nevertheless he must say. And what was more, though her barbed shafts had set his blood tingling, though the short phrases that she discharged at him one by one were very keen and sharp and cold, he must control himself lest he should lose all by an outbreak of anger.

"Mme. la Duchesse, I am in despair that God should have invented no way for a woman to confirm the gift of her heart save by adding the gift of her person. The high value which you yourself put upon the gift teaches me that I cannot attach less importance to it. If you have given me your inmost self and your whole heart, as you tell me, what can the rest matter? And besides, if my happiness means so painful a sacrifice, let us say no more about it. But you must pardon a man of spirit if he feels humiliated at being taken for a spaniel."

The tone in which the last remark was uttered might perhaps have frightened another woman; but when the wearer of a petticoat has allowed herself to be addressed as a Divinity, and thereby set herself above all other mortals, no power on earth can be so haughty.

"M. le Marquis, I am in despair that God should not have invented some nobler way for a man to confirm the gift of his heart than by the manifestation of prodigiously vulgar desires. We become bond-slaves when we give ourselves body and soul, but a man is bound to nothing by accepting the gift. Who will assure me that love will last? The very love that I might show for you at every moment, the better to keep your love, might serve you as a reason for deserting me. I have no wish to be a second edition of Mme. de Beauséant. Who can ever know what it is that keeps you beside us? Our persistent coldness of heart is the cause of an unfailing passion in some of you;

other men ask for an untiring devotion, to be idolized at every moment; some for gentleness, others for tyranny. No woman in this world as yet has really read the riddle of man's heart."

There was a pause. When she spoke again it was in a different tone.

"After all, my friend, you cannot prevent a woman from trembling at the question, 'Will this love last always?' Hard though my words may be, the dread of losing you puts them into my mouth. Oh, me! it is not I who speak, dear, it is reason; and how should any one so mad as I be reasonable? In truth, I am nothing of the sort."

The poignant irony of her answer had changed before the end into the most musical accents in which a woman could find utterance for ingenuous love. To listen to her words was to pass in a moment from martyrdom to heaven. Montriveau grew pale; and for the first time in his life he fell on his knees before a woman. He kissed the Duchess's skirt hem, her knees, her feet; but for the credit of the Faubourg Saint-Germain it is necessary to respect the mysteries of its boudoirs, where many are fain to take the utmost that Love can give without giving proof of love in return.

The Duchess thought herself generous when she suffered herself to be adored. But Montriveau was in a wild frenzy of joy over her complete surrender of the position.

"Dear Antoinette," he cried. "Yes, you are right; I will not have you doubt any longer. I too am trembling at this moment—lest the angel of my life should leave me; I wish I could invent some tie that might bind us to each other irrevocably."

"Ah!" she said, under her breath, "so I was right, you see."

"Let me say all that I have to say; I will scatter all your fears with a word. Listen! if I deserted you, I should deserve to die a thousand deaths. Be wholly mine, and I will give you the right to kill me if I am false. I myself

will write a letter explaining certain reasons for taking my own life; I will make my final arrangements, in short. You shall have the letter in your keeping; in the eye of the law it will be a sufficient explanation of my death. You can avenge yourself, and fear nothing from God or men."

"What good would the letter be to me? What would life be if I had lost your love? If I wished to kill you, should I not be ready to follow? No; thank you for the thought, but I do not want the letter. Should I not begin to dread that you were faithful to me through fear? And if a man knows that he must risk his life for a stolen pleasure, might it not seem more tempting? Armand, the thing I ask of you is the one hard thing to do."

"Then what is it that you wish?"

"Your obedience and my liberty."

"Ah, God!" cried he, "I am a child."

"A wayward, much spoiled child," she said, stroking the thick hair, for his head still lay on her knee. "Ah! and loved far more than he believes, and yet he is very disobedient. Why not stay as we are? Why not sacrifice to me the desires that hurt me? Why not take what I can give, when it is all that I can honestly grant? Are you not happy?"

"Oh, yes, I am happy when I have not a doubt left. Antoinette, doubt in love is a kind of death, is it not?"

In a moment he showed himself as he was, as all men are under the influence of that hot fever; he grew eloquent, insinuating. And the Duchess tasted the pleasures which she reconciled with her conscience by some private, Jesuitical ukase of her own; Armand's love gave her a thrill of cerebral excitement which custom made as necessary to her as society, or the Opera. To feel that she was adored by this man, who rose above other men, whose character frightened her; to treat him like a child; to play with him as Poppæa played with Nero—many women, like the wives of King Henry VIII., have paid for such a perilous delight with all the blood in their veins. Grim presentiment! Even

as she surrendered the delicate, pale, gold curls to his touch, and felt the close pressure of his hand, the little hand of a man whose greatness she could not mistake; even as she herself played with his dark, thick locks, in that boudoir where she reigned a queen, the Duchess would say to herself: "This man is capable of killing me if he once finds out that I am playing with him."

Armand de Montriveau stayed with her till two o'clock in the morning. From that moment this woman, whom he loved, was neither a duchess nor a Navarreins; Antoinette, in her disguises, had gone so far as to appear to be a woman. On that most blissful evening, the sweetest prelude ever played by a Parisienne to what the world calls "a slip"; in spite of all her affectations of a coyness which she did not feel, the General saw all maidenly beauty in her. He had some excuse for believing that so many storms of caprice had been but clouds covering a heavenly soul; that these must be lifted one by one like the veils that hid her divine loveliness. The Duchess became, for him, the most simple and girlish mistress; she was the one woman in the world for him; and he went away quite happy in that at last he had brought her to give him such pledges of love that it seemed to him impossible but that he should be but her husband henceforth in secret, her choice sanctioned by Heaven.

Armand went slowly home, turning this thought in his mind with the impartiality of a man who is conscious of all the responsibilities that love lays on him while he tastes the sweetness of its joys. He went along the Quais to see the widest possible space of sky; his heart had grown in him; he would fain have had the bounds of the firmament and of earth enlarged. It seemed to him that his lungs drew an ampler breath. In the course of his self-examination, as he walked, he vowed to love this woman so devoutly that every day of her life she should find absolution for her sins against society in unfailing happiness. Sweet stirrings of life when life is at the full! The man that is strong enough to steep his soul in the color of one emotion feels infinite joy as

glimpses open out for him of an ardent lifetime that knows no diminution of passion to the end; even so it is permitted to certain mystics, in ecstasy, to behold the Light of God. Love would be naught without the belief that it would last forever; love grows great through constancy. It was thus that, wholly absorbed by his happiness, Montriveau understood passion.

"We belong to each other forever!"

The thought was like a talisman fulfilling the wishes of his life. He did not ask whether the Duchess might not change, whether her love might not last. No, for he had faith. Without that virtue there is no future for Christianity, and perhaps it is even more necessary to society. A conception of life as feeling occurred to him for the first time; hitherto he had lived by action, the most strenuous exertion of human energies, the physical devotion, as it may be called, of the soldier.

Next day M. de Montriveau went early in the direction of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. He had made an appointment at a house not far from the Hotel de Langeais; and the business over, he went thither as if to his own home. The General's companion chanced to be a man for whom he felt a kind of repulsion whenever he met him in other houses. This was the Marquis de Ronquerolles, whose reputation had grown so great in Paris boudoirs. He was witty, clever, and what was more—courageous; he set the fashion to all the young men in Paris. As a man of gallantry, his success and experience were equally matters of envy; and neither fortune nor birth was wanting in his case, qualifications which add such lustre in Paris to a reputation as a leader of fashion.

"Where are you going?" asked M. de Ronquerolles.

"To Mme. de Langeais's."

"Ah, true. I forgot that you had allowed her to lime you. You are wasting your affections on her when they might be much better employed elsewhere. I could have told you of half-a-score of women in the financial world, any one of them a thousand times better worth your while than

that titled courtesan, who does with her brains what less artificial women do with—''

''What is this, my dear fellow?'' Armand broke in. ''The Duchess is an angel of innocence.''

Ronquerolles began to laugh.

''Things being thus, dear boy,'' said he, ''it is my duty to enlighten you. Just a word; there is no harm in it between ourselves. Has the Duchess surrendered? If so, I have nothing more to say. Come, give me your confidence. There is no occasion to waste your time in grafting your great nature on that unthankful stock, when all your hopes and cultivation will come to nothing.''

Armand ingenuously made a kind of general report of his position, enumerating with much minuteness the slender right so hardly won. Ronquerolles burst into a peal of laughter so heartless that it would have cost any other man his life. But from their manner of speaking and looking at each other during that colloquy beneath the wall, in a corner almost as remote from intrusion as the desert itself, it was easy to imagine the friendship between the two men knew no bounds, and that no power on earth could estrange them.

''My dear Armand, why did you not tell me that the Duchess was a puzzle to you? I would have given you a little advice which might have brought your flirtation properly through. You must know, to begin with, that the women of our Faubourg, like any other women, love to steep themselves in love; but they have a mind to possess and not to be possessed. They have made a sort of compromise with human nature. The code of their parish gives them a pretty wide latitude short of the last transgression. The sweets enjoyed by this fair Duchess of yours are so many venial sins to be washed away in the waters of penitence. But if you had the impertinence to ask in earnest for the mortal sin to which naturally you are sure to attach the highest importance, you would see the deep disdain with which the door of the boudoir and the house would be incontinently shut upon you. The tender Antoinette would dismiss everything

from her memory; you would be less than a cipher for her. She would wipe away your kisses, my dear friend, as indifferently as she would perform her ablutions. She would sponge love from her cheeks as she washes off rouge. We know women of that sort—the thoroughbred Parisienne. Have you ever noticed a grisette tripping along the street? Her face is as good as a picture. A pretty cap, fresh cheeks, trim hair, a guileful smile, and the rest of her almost neglected. Is not this true to the life? Well, that is the Parisienne. She knows that her face is all that will be seen, so she devotes all her care, finery, and vanity to her head. The Duchess is the same; the head is everything with her. She can only feel through her intellect, her heart lies in her brain, she is a sort of intellectual epicure, she has a head-voice. We call that kind of poor creature a Laïs of the intellect. You have been taken in like a boy. If you doubt it, you can have proof of it to-night, this morning, this instant. Go up to her, try the demand as an experiment, insist peremptorily if it is refused. You might set about it like the late Maréchal de Richelieu, and get nothing for your pains."

Armand was dumb with amazement.

"Has your desire reached the point of infatuation?"

"I want her at any cost!" Montriveau cried out despairingly.

"Very well. Now, look here. Be as inexorable as she is herself. Try to humiliate her, to sting her vanity. Do *not* try to move her heart, nor her soul, but the woman's nerves and temperament, for she is both nervous and lymphatic. If you can once awaken desire in her, you are safe. But you must drop these romantic boyish notions of yours. If when once you have her in your eagle's talons you yield a point or draw back, if you so much as stir an eyelid, if she thinks that she can regain her ascendency over you, she will slip out of your clutches like a fish, and you will never catch her again. Be as inflexible as law. Show no more charity than the headsman. Hit hard, and then hit again. Strike and keep on striking as if you were giving her the knout.

Duchesses are made of hard stuff, my dear Armand; there is a sort of feminine nature that is only softened by repeated blows; and as suffering develops a heart in women of that sort, so it is a work of charity not to spare the rod. Do you persevere. Ah! when pain has thoroughly relaxed those nerves and softened the fibres that you take to be so pliant and yielding; when a shrivelled heart has learned to expand and contract and to beat under this discipline; when the brain has capitulated—then, perhaps, passion may enter among the steel springs of this machinery that turns out tears and affectations and languors and melting phrases; then you shall see a most magnificent conflagration (always supposing that the chimney takes fire). The steel feminine system will glow red-hot like iron in the forge; that kind of heat lasts longer than any other, and the glow of it may possibly turn to love.

"Still," he continued, "I have my doubts. And, after all, is it worth while to take so much trouble with the Duchess? Between ourselves, a man of my stamp ought first to take her in hand and break her in; I would make a charming woman of her; she is a thoroughbred; whereas, you two left to yourselves will never get beyond the A B C. But you are in love with her, and just now you might not perhaps share my views on this subject— A pleasant time to you, my children," added Ronquerolles, after a pause. Then with a laugh: "I have decided myself for facile beauties; they are tender, at any rate, the natural woman appears in their love without any of your social seasonings. A woman that haggles over herself, my poor boy, and only means to inspire love! Well, have her like an extra horse—for show. The match between the sofa and confessional, black and white, queen and knight, conscientious scruples and pleasure, is an uncommonly amusing game of chess. And if a man knows the game, let him be never so little of a rako, he wins in three moves. Now, if I undertook a woman of that sort, I should start with the deliberate purpose of—" His voice sank to a whisper over the last words in Armand's ear, and he went before there was time to reply.

As for Montriveau, he sprang at a bound across the courtyard of the Hotel de Langeais, went unannounced up the stairs straight to the Duchess's bedroom.

"This is an unheard-of thing," she said, hastily wrapping her dressing-gown about her. "Armand! this is abominable of you! Come, leave the room, I beg. Just go out of the room, and go at once. Wait for me in the drawing-room.—Come now!"

"Dear angel, has a plighted lover no privilege whatsoever?"

"But, monsieur, it is in the worst possible taste of a plighted lover or a wedded husband to break in like this upon his wife."

He came up to the Duchess, took her in his arms, and held her tightly to him.

"Forgive, dear Antoinette; but a host of horrid doubts are fermenting in my heart."

"*Doubts?* Fie!—Oh, fie on you!"

"Doubts all but justified. If you loved me, would you make this quarrel? Would you not be glad to see me? Would you not have felt a something stir in your heart? For I, that am not a woman, feel a thrill in my inmost self at the mere sound of your voice. Often in a ballroom a longing has come upon me to spring to your side and put my arms about your neck."

"Oh! if you have doubts of me so long as I am not ready to spring to your arms before all the world, I shall be doubted all my life long, I suppose. Why, Othello was a mere child compared with you!"

"Ah!" he cried despairingly, "you have no love for me—"

"Admit, at any rate, that at this moment you are not lovable."

"Then I have still to find favor in your sight?"

"Oh, I should think so. Come," added she, with a little imperious air, "go out of the room, leave me. I am not like you; I wish always to find favor in your eyes."

Never woman better understood the art of putting charm

into insolence, and does not the charm double the effect? is it not enough to infuriate the coolest of men? There was a sort of untrammelled freedom about Mme. de Langeais; a something in her eyes, her voice, her attitude, which is never seen in a woman who loves when she stands face to face with him at the mere sight of whom her heart must needs begin to beat. The Marquis de Ronquerolles's counsels had cured Armand of sheepishness; and further, there came to his aid that rapid power of intuition which passion will develop at moments in the least wise among mortals, while a great man at such a time possesses it to the full. He guessed the terrible truth revealed by the Duchess's nonchalance, and his heart swelled with the storm like a lake rising in flood.

"If you told me the truth yesterday, be mine, dear Antoinette," he cried; "you shall—"

"In the first place," said she composedly, thrusting him back as he came nearer—"in the first place, you are not to compromise me. My woman might overhear you. Respect me, I beg of you. Your familiarity is all very well in my boudoir in an evening; here it is quite different. Besides, what may your 'you shall' mean? 'You shall.' No one as yet has ever used that word to me. It is quite ridiculous, it seems to me, absolutely ridiculous."

"Will you surrender nothing to me on this point?"

"Oh! do you call a woman's right to dispose of herself a 'point'? A capital point indeed; you will permit me to be entirely my own mistress on that 'point.'"

"And how if, believing in your promises to me, I should absolutely require it?"

"Oh! then you would prove that I made the greatest possible mistake when I made you a promise of any kind; and I should beg you to leave me in peace."

The General's face grew white; he was about to spring to her side, when Mme. de Langeais rang the bell, the maid appeared, and, smiling with a mocking grace, the Duchess added, "Be so good as to return when I am visible."

Then Montriveau felt the hardness of a woman as cold

and keen as a steel blade; she was crushing in her scorn. In one moment she had snapped the bonds which held firm only for her lover. She had read Armand's intention in his face, and held that the moment had come for teaching the Imperial soldier his lesson. He was to be made to feel that though duchesses may lend themselves to love, they do not give themselves, and that the conquest of one of them would prove a harder matter than the conquest of Europe.

"Madame," returned Armand, "I have not time to wait. I am a spoiled child, as you told me yourself. When I seriously resolve to have that of which we have been speaking, I shall have it."

"You will have it?" queried she, and there was a trace of surprise in her loftiness.

"I shall have it."

"Oh! you would do me a great pleasure by 'resolving' to have it. For curiosity's sake, I should be delighted to know how you would set about it—"

"I am delighted to put a new interest into your life," interrupted Montriveau, breaking into a laugh which dismayed the Duchess. "Will you permit me to take you to the ball to-night?"

"A thousand thanks. M. de Marsay has been beforehand with you. I gave him my promise."

Montriveau bowed gravely and went.

"So Ronquerolles was right," thought he, "and now for a game of chess."

Thenceforward he hid his agitation by complete composure. No man is strong enough to bear such sudden alternations from the height of happiness to the depths of wretchedness. So he had caught a glimpse of happy life the better to feel the emptiness of his previous existence? There was a terrible storm within him; but he had learned to endure, and bore the shock of tumultuous thoughts as a granite cliff stands out against the surge of an angry sea.

"I could say nothing. When I am with her my wits desert me. She does not know how vile and contemptible

she is. Nobody has ventured to bring her face to face with herself. She has played with many a man, no doubt; I will avenge them all."

For the first time, it may be, in a man's heart, revenge and love were blended so equally that Montriveau himself could not know whether love or revenge would carry all before it. That very evening he went to the ball at which he was sure of seeing the Duchesse de Langeais, and almost despaired of reaching her heart. He inclined to think that there was something diabolical about this woman, who was gracious to him and radiant with charming smiles; probably because she had no wish to allow the world to think that she had compromised herself with M. de Montriveau. Coolness on both sides is a sign of love; but so long as the Duchess was the same as ever, while the Marquis looked sullen and morose, was it not plain that she had conceded nothing? Onlookers know the rejected lover by various signs and tokens; they never mistake the genuine symptoms for a coolness such as some women command their adorers to feign, in the hope of concealing their love. Every one laughed at Montriveau; and he, having omitted to consult his *cornac*, was abstracted and ill at ease. M. de Ronquerolles would very likely have bidden him compromise the Duchess by responding to her show of friendliness by passionate demonstrations; but as it was, Armand de Montriveau came away from the ball, loathing human nature, and even then scarcely ready to believe in such complete depravity.

"If there is no executioner for such crimes," he said as he looked up at the lighted windows of the ballroom where the most enchanting women in Paris were dancing, laughing, and chatting, "I will take you by the nape of the neck, Mme. la Duchesse, and make you feel something that bites more deeply than the knife in the Place de la Grève. Steel against steel; we shall see which heart will leave the deeper mark."

For a week or so Mme. de Langeais hoped to see the Marquis de Montriveau again; but he contented himself with

sending his card every morning to the Hotel de Langeais. The Duchess could not help shuddering each time that the card was brought in, and a dim foreboding crossed her mind, but the thought was vague as a presentiment of disaster. When her eyes fell on the name, it seemed to her that she felt the touch of the implacable man's strong hand in her hair; sometimes the words seemed like a prognostication of a vengeance which her lively intellect invented in the most shocking forms. She had studied him too well not to dread him. Would he murder her, she wondered? Would that bull-necked man dash out her vitals by flinging her over his head? Would he trample her body under his feet? When, where, and how would he get her into his power? Would he make her suffer very much, and what kind of pain would he inflict? She repented of her conduct. There were hours when, if he had come, she would have gone to his arms in complete self-surrender.

Every night before she slept she saw Montriveau's face; every night it wore a different aspect. Sometimes she saw his bitter smile, sometimes the Jovelike knitting of the brows; or his leonine look, or some disdainful movement of the shoulders made him terrible for her. Next day the card seemed stained with blood. The name of Montriveau stirred her now as the presence of the fiery, stubborn, exacting lover had never done. Her apprehensions gathered strength in the silence. She was forced, without aid from without, to face the thought of a hideous duel of which she could not speak. Her proud hard nature was more responsive to thrills of hate than it had ever been to the caresses of love. Ah! if the General could but have seen her, as she sat with her forehead drawn into folds between her brows, immersed in bitter thoughts in that boudoir where he had enjoyed such happy moments, he might perhaps have conceived high hopes. Of all human passions, is not pride alone incapable of engendering anything base? Mme. de Langeais kept her thoughts to herself, but is it not permissible to suppose that M. de Montriveau was no longer indifferent to her?

And has not a man gained ground immensely when a woman thinks about him? He is bound to make progress with her either one way or the other afterward.

Put any feminine creature under the feet of a furious horse or other fearsome beast; she will certainly drop on her knees and look for death: but if the brute shows a milder mood and does not utterly slay her, she will love the horse, lion, bull, or what not, and will speak of him quite at her ease. The Duchess felt that she was under the lion's paws; she quaked, but she did not hate him.

The man and woman thus singularly placed with regard to each other met three times in society during the course of that week. Each time, in reply to coquettish questioning glances, the Duchess received a respectful bow, and smiles tinged with such savage irony that all her apprehensions over the card in the morning were revived at night. Our lives are simply such as our feelings shape them for us; and the feelings of these two had hollowed out a great gulf between them.

The Comtesse de Sérizy, the Marquis de Ronquerolles's sister, gave a great ball at the beginning of the following week, and Mme. de Langeais was sure to go to it. Armand was the first person whom the Duchess saw when she came into the room, and this time Armand was looking out for her, or so she thought at least. The two exchanged a look, and suddenly the woman felt a cold perspiration break from every pore. She had thought all along that Montriveau was capable of taking reprisals in some unheard-of way proportioned to their condition; and now the revenge had been discovered, it was ready, heated, and boiling. Lightnings flashed from the foiled lover's eyes, his face was radiant with exultant vengeance. And the Duchess? Her eyes were haggard in spite of her resolution to be cool and insolent. She went to take her place beside the Comtesse de Sérizy, who could not help exclaiming, "Dear Antoinette! what is the matter with you? You are enough to frighten one."

"I shall be all right after a quadrille," she answered, giving a hand to a young man who came up at that moment.

Mme. de Langeais waltzed that evening with a sort of excitement and transport which redoubled Montriveau's lowering looks. He stood in front of the line of spectators, who were amusing themselves by looking on. Every time that *she* came past him, his eyes darted down upon her eddying face; he might have been a tiger with the prey in his grasp. The waltz came to an end, Mme. de Langeais went back to her place beside the Countess, and Montriveau never took his eyes off her, talking all the while with a stranger.

"One of the things that struck me most on the journey," he was saying (and the Duchess listened with all her ears), "was the remark which the man makes at Westminster when you are shown the axe with which a man in a mask cut off Charles the First's head, so they tell you. The King made it first of all to some inquisitive person, and they repeat it still in memory of him."

"What does the man say?" asked Mme. de Sérizy.

" 'Do not touch the axe!' " replied Montriveau, and there was menace in the sound of his voice.

"Really, my Lord Marquis," said Mme. de Langeais, "you tell this old story that everybody knows if they have been to London, and look at my neck in such a melodramatic way that you seem to me to have an axe in your hand."

The Duchess was in a cold sweat, but nevertheless she laughed as she spoke the last words.

"But circumstances give the story a quite new application," returned he.

"How so; pray tell me, for pity's sake?"

"In this way, madame—you have touched the axe," said Montriveau, lowering his voice.

"What an enchanting prophecy!" returned she, smiling with assumed grace. "And when is my head to fall?"

"I have no wish to see that pretty head of yours cut off. I only fear some great misfortune for you. If your head

were clipped close, would you feel no regrets for the dainty golden hair that you turn to such good account?"

"There are those for whom a woman would love to make such a sacrifice; even if, as often happens, it is for the sake of a man who cannot make allowances for an outbreak of temper."

"Quite so. Well, and if some wag were to spoil your beauty on a sudden by some chemical process, and you, who are but eighteen for us, were to be a hundred years old?"

"Why, the smallpox is our battle of Waterloo, monsieur," she interrupted. "After it is over we find out those who love us sincerely."

"Would you not regret the lovely face that—?"

"Oh! indeed I should, but less for my own sake than for the sake of some one else whose delight it might have been. And, after all, if I were loved, always loved, and truly loved, what would my beauty matter to me?—What do you say, Clara?"

"It is a dangerous speculation," replied Mme. de Sérizy.

"Is it permissible to ask His Majesty the King of Sorcerers when I made the mistake of touching the axe, since I have not been to London as yet?—"

"*Not so*," he answered in English, with a burst of ironical laughter.

"And when will the punishment begin?"

At this Montriveau coolly took out his watch, and ascertained the hour with a truly appalling air of conviction.

"A dreadful misfortune will befall you before this day is out."

"I am not a child to be easily frightened, or rather, I am a child ignorant of danger," said the Duchess. "I shall dance now without fear on the edge of the precipice."

"I am delighted to know that you have so much strength of character," he answered, as he watched her go to take her place in a square dance.

But the Duchess, in spite of her apparent contempt for Armand's dark prophecies, was really frightened. Her late

lover's presence weighed upon her morally and physically with a sense of oppression that scarcely ceased when he left the ballroom. And yet when she had drawn freer breath, and enjoyed the relief for a moment, she found herself regretting the sensation of dread, so greedy of extreme sensations is the feminine nature. The regret was not love, but it was certainly akin to other feelings which prepare the way for love. And then—as if the impression which Montriveau had made upon her were suddenly revived—she recollected his air of conviction as he took out his watch, and in a sudden spasm of dread she went out.

By this time it was about midnight. One of her servants, waiting with her pelisse, went down to order her carriage. On her way home she fell naturally enough to musing over M. de Montriveau's prediction. Arrived in her own courtyard, as she supposed, she entered a vestibule almost like that of her own hotel, and suddenly saw that the staircase was different. She was in a strange house. Turning to call her servants, she was attacked by several men, who rapidly flung a handkerchief over her mouth, bound her hand and foot, and carried her off. She shrieked aloud.

"Madame, our orders are to kill you if you scream," a voice said in her ear.

So great was the Duchess's terror that she could never recollect how nor by whom she was transported. When she came to herself she was lying on a couch in a bachelor's lodging, her hands and feet tied with silken cords. In spite of herself, she shrieked aloud as she looked round and met Armand de Montriveau's eyes. He was sitting in his dressing-gown, quietly smoking a cigar in his armchair.

"Do not cry out, Mme. la Duchesse," he said, coolly taking the cigar out of his mouth; "I have a headache. Besides, I will untie you. But listen attentively to what I have the honor to say to you."

Very carefully he untied the knots that bound her feet.

"What would be the use of calling out? Nobody can

hear your cries. You are too well bred to make any unnecessary fuss. If you do not stay quietly, if you insist upon a struggle with me, I shall tie your hands and feet again. All things considered, I think that you have self-respect enough to stay on this sofa as if you were lying on your own at home; cold as ever, if you will. You have made me shed many tears on this couch, tears that I hid from all other eyes."

While Montriveau was speaking, the Duchess glanced about her; it was a woman's glance, a stolen look that saw all things and seemed to see nothing. She was much pleased with the room. It was rather like a monk's cell. The man's character and thoughts seemed to pervade it. No decoration of any kind broke the gray painted surface of the walls. A green carpet covered the floor. A black sofa, a table littered with papers, two big easy-chairs, a chest of drawers with an alarm clock by way of ornament, a very low bedstead with a coverlet flung over it—a red cloth with a black key border—all these things made part of a whole that told of a life reduced to its simplest terms. A triple candle-sconce of Egyptian design on the chimney-piece recalled the vast spaces of the desert and Montriveau's long wanderings; a huge sphinx-claw stood out beneath the folds of stuff at the bedfoot; and just beyond, a green curtain with a black and scarlet border was suspended by large rings from a spear handle above a door near one corner of the room. The other door by which the band had entered was likewise curtained, but the drapery hung from an ordinary curtain-rod. As the Duchess finally noted that the pattern was the same on both, she saw that the door at the bedfoot stood open; gleams of ruddy light from the room beyond flickered below the fringed border. Naturally, the ominous light roused her curiosity; she fancied she could distinguish strange shapes in the shadows; but as it did not occur to her at the time that danger could come from that quarter, she tried to gratify a more ardent curiosity.

"Monsieur, if it is not indiscreet, may I ask what you mean to do with me?" The insolence and irony of the tone stung through the words. The Duchess quite believed that she read extravagant love in Montriveau's speech. He had carried her off; was not that in itself an acknowledgment of her power?

"Nothing whatever, madame," he returned, gracefully puffing the last whiff of cigar smoke. "You will remain here for a short time. First of all, I should like to explain to you what you are, and what I am. I cannot put my thoughts into words while you are twisting on the sofa in your boudoir; and besides, in your own house you take offence at the slightest hint, you ring the bell, make an outcry, and turn your lover out at the door as if he were the basest of wretches. Here my mind is unfettered. Here nobody can turn me out. Here you shall be my victim for a few seconds, and you are going to be so exceedingly kind as to listen to me. You need fear nothing. I did not carry you off to insult you, nor yet to take by force what you refused to grant of your own will to my unworthiness. I could not stoop so low. You possibly think of outrage; for myself, I have no such thoughts."

He flung his cigar coolly into the fire.

"The smoke is unpleasant to you, no doubt, madame?" he said, and rising at once, he took a chafing-dish from the hearth, burned perfumes, and purified the air. The Duchess's astonishment was only equalled by her humiliation. She was in this man's power; and he would not abuse his power. The eyes in which love had once blazed like flame were now quiet and steady as stars. She trembled. Her dread of Armand was increased by a nightmare sensation of restlessness and utter inability to move; she felt as if she were turned to stone. She lay passive in the grip of fear. She thought she saw the light behind the curtains grow to a blaze, as if blown up by a pair of bellows; in another moment the gleams of flame grew brighter, and she fancied that three masked figures suddenly flashed out;

but the terrible vision disappeared so swiftly that she took it for an optical delusion.

"Madame," Armand continued with cold contempt, "one minute, just one minute is enough for me, and you shall feel it afterward at every moment throughout your lifetime, the one eternity over which I have power. I am not God. Listen carefully to me," he continued, pausing to add solemnity to his words. "Love will always come at your call. You have boundless power over men: but remember that once you called love, and love came to you; love as pure and true-hearted as may be on earth, and as reverent as it was passionate; fond as a devoted woman's, as a mother's love; a love so great indeed that it was past the bounds of reason. You played with it, and you committed a crime. Every woman has a right to refuse herself to love which she feels she cannot share; and if a man loves and cannot win love in return, he is not to be pitied, he has no right to complain. But with a semblance of love to attract an unfortunate creature cut off from all affection; to teach him to understand happiness to the full, only to snatch it from him; to rob him of his future of felicity; to slay his happiness not merely to-day, but as long as his life lasts, by poisoning every hour of it and every thought—this I call a fearful crime!"

"Monsieur—"

"I cannot allow you to answer me yet. So listen to me still. In any case I have rights over you; but I only choose to exercise one—the right of the judge over the criminal, so that I may arouse your conscience. If you had no conscience left, I should not reproach you at all; but you are so young! You must feel some life still in your heart; or so I like to believe. While I think of you as depraved enough to do a wrong which the law does not punish, I do not think you so degraded that you cannot comprehend the full meaning of my words. I resume."

As he spoke the Duchess heard the smothered sound of a pair of bellows. Those mysterious figures which she had

just seen were blowing up the fire, no doubt; the glow shone through the curtain. But Montriveau's lurid face was turned upon her; she could not choose but wait with a fast-beating heart and eyes fixed in a stare. However curious she felt, the heat in Armand's words interested her even more than the crackling of the mysterious flames.

"Madame," he went on after a pause, "if some poor wretch commits a murder in Paris, it is the executioner's duty, you know, to lay hands on him and stretch him on the plank, where murderers pay for their crimes with their heads. Then the newspapers inform every one, rich and poor, so that the former are assured that they may sleep in peace, and the latter are warned that they must be on the watch if they would live. Well, you that are religious, and even a little of a bigot, may have masses said for such a man's soul. You both belong to the same family, but yours is the elder branch; and the elder branch may occupy high places in peace and live happily and without cares. Want or anger may drive your brother the convict to take a man's life; you have taken more, you have taken the joy out of a man's life, you have killed all that was best in his life—his dearest beliefs. The murderer simply lay in wait for his victim, and killed him reluctantly, and in fear of the scaffold; but *you* . . . ! You heaped up every sin that weakness can commit against strength that suspected no evil; you tamed a passive victim, the better to gnaw his heart out; you lured him with caresses; you left nothing undone that could set him dreaming, imagining, longing for the bliss of love. You asked innumerably sacrifices of him, only to refuse to make any in return. He should see the light indeed before you put out his eyes! It is wonderful how you found the heart to do it! Such villanies demand a display of resource quite above the comprehension of those bourgeoises whom you laugh at and despise. They can give and forgive; they know how to love and suffer. The grandeur of their devotion dwarfs us. Rising higher in the social scale, one finds just as much mud as at

the lower end; but with this difference, at the upper end it is hard and gilded over.

"Yes, to find baseness in perfection, you must look for a noble bringing up, a great name, a fair woman, a duchess. You cannot fall lower than the lowest unless you are set high above the rest of the world.—I express my thoughts badly; the wounds you dealt me are too painful as yet, but do not think that I complain. My words are not the expression of any hope for myself; there is no trace of bitterness in them. Know this, madame, for a certainty—I forgive you. My forgiveness is so complete that you need not feel in the least sorry that you came hither to find it against your will. . . . But you might take advantage of other hearts as childlike as my own, and it is my duty to spare them anguish. So you have inspired the thought of justice. Expiate your sin here on earth; God may perhaps forgive you; I wish that He may, but He is inexorable, and will strike."

The broken-spirited, broken-hearted woman looked up, her eyes filled with tears.

"Why do you cry? Be true to your nature. You could look on indifferently at the torture of a heart as you broke it. That will do, madame, do not cry. I cannot bear it any longer. Other men will tell you that you have given them life; as for myself, I tell you, with rapture, that you have given me blank extinction. Perhaps you guess that I am not my own, that I am bound to live for my friends, that from this time forth I must endure the cold chill of death, as well as the burden of life? Is it possible that there can be so much kindness in you? Are you like the desert tigress that licks the wounds she has inflicted?"

The Duchess burst out sobbing.

"Pray spare your tears, madame. If I believed in them at all, it would merely set me on my guard. Is this another of your artifices? or is it not? You have used so many with me; how can one think that there is any truth in you? Noth-

ing that you do or say has any power now to move me. That is all I have to say."

Mme. de Langeais rose to her feet, with a great dignity and humility in her bearing.

"You are right to treat me very hardly," she said, holding out a hand to the man who did not take it; "you have not spoken hardly enough; and I deserve this punishment."

"*I* punish you, madame! A man must love still, to punish, must he not? From me you must expect no feeling, nothing resembling it. If I chose, I might be accuser and judge in my cause, and pronounce and carry out the sentence. But I am about to fulfil a duty, not a desire of vengeance of any kind. The cruelest revenge of all, I think, is scorn of revenge when it is in our power to take it. Perhaps I shall be the minister of your pleasures; who knows? Perhaps from this time forth, as you gracefully wear the tokens of disgrace by which society marks out the criminal, you may perforce learn something of the convict's sense of honor. And then, you will love!"

The Duchess sat listening; her meekness was unfeigned; it was no coquettish device. When she spoke at last, it was after a silence.

"Armand," she began, "it seems to me that when I resisted love, I was obeying all the instincts of woman's modesty; I should not have looked for such reproaches from *you*. I was weak; you have turned all my weaknesses against me, and made so many crimes of them. How could you fail to understand that the curiosity of love might have carried me further than I ought to go; and that next morning I might be angry with myself, and wretched because I had gone too far? Alas! I sinned in ignorance. I was as sincere in my wrongdoing, I swear to you, as in my remorse. There was far more love for you in my severity than in my concessions. And besides, of what do you complain? I gave you my heart; that was not enough; you demanded, brutally, that I should give my person—"

"Brutally?" repeated Montriveau. But to himself he

said, "If I once allow her to dispute over words, I am lost."

"Yes. You came to me as if I were one of those women. You showed none of the respect, none of the attentions of love. Had I not reason to reflect? Very well, I reflected. The unseemliness of your conduct is not inexcusable; love lay at the source of it: let me think so, and justify you to myself.—Well, Armand, this evening, even while you were prophesying evil, I felt convinced that there was happiness in store for us both. Yes, I put my faith in the noble, proud nature so often tested and proved." She bent lower. "And I was yours wholly," she murmured in his ear. "I felt a longing that I cannot express to give happiness to a man so violently tried by adversity. If I must have a master, my master should be a great man. As I felt conscious of my height, the less I cared to descend. I felt I could trust you, I saw a whole lifetime of love, while you were pointing to death. . . . Strength and kindness always go together. My friend, you are so strong, you will not be unkind to a helpless woman who loves you. If I was wrong, is there no way of obtaining forgiveness? No way of making reparation? Repentance is the charm of love; I should like to be very charming for you. How could I, alone among women, fail to know a woman's doubts and fears, the timidity that it is so natural to feel when you bind yourself for life, and know how easily a man snaps such ties? The bourgeoises, with whom you compared me just now, give themselves, but they struggle first. Very well—I struggled; but here I am!—Ah! God, he does not hear me!" she broke off, and wringing her hands, she cried out, "But I love you! I am yours!" and fell at Armand's feet.

"Yours! yours! my one and only master!"

Armand tried to raise her.

"Madame, it is too late! Antoinette cannot save the Duchesse de Langeais. I cannot believe in either. To-day you may give yourself; to-morrow, you may refuse. No power in earth or heaven can insure me the sweet constancy

of love. All love's pledges lay in the past; and now nothing of that past exists."

The light behind the curtain blazed up so brightly that the Duchess could not help turning her head; this time she distinctly saw the three masked figures.

"Armand," she said, "I would not wish to think ill of you. Why are those men there? What are you going to do to me?"

"Those men will be as silent as I myself with regard to the thing which is about to be done. Think of them simply as my hands and my heart. One of them is a surgeon—"

"A surgeon! Armand, my friend, of all things, suspense is the hardest to bear. Just speak; tell me if you wish for my life; I will give it to you, you shall not take it—"

"Then you did not understand me? Did I not speak just now of justice? To put an end to your misapprehensions," continued he, taking up a small steel object from the table, "I will now explain what I have decided with regard to you."

He held out a Lorraine cross, fastened to the tip of a steel rod.

"Two of my friends at this very moment are heating another cross, made on this pattern, red-hot. We are going to stamp it upon your forehead, here between the eyes, so that there will be no possibility of hiding the mark with diamonds, and so avoiding people's questions. In short, you shall bear on your forehead the brand of infamy which your brothers the convicts wear on their shoulders. The pain is a mere trifle, but I feared a nervous crisis of some kind, of resistance—"

"Resistance?" she cried, clapping her hands for joy. "Oh, no, no! I would have the whole world here to see. Ah, my Armand, brand her quickly, this creature of yours; brand her with your mark as a poor little trifle belonging to you. You asked for pledges of my love; here they are all in one. Ah! for me there is nothing but mercy and forgiveness and eternal happiness in this revenge of yours.

When you have marked this woman with your mark, when you set your crimson brand on her, your slave in soul, you can never afterward abandon her, you will be mine for evermore! When you cut me off from my kind, you make yourself responsible for my happiness, or you prove yourself base; and I know that you are noble and great! Why, when a woman loves, the brand of love is burned into her soul by her own will.—Come in, gentlemen! come in and brand her, this Duchesse de Langeais. She is M. de Montriveau's forever! Ah! come quickly, all of you, my forehead burns hotter than your fire!"

Armand turned his head sharply away lest he should see the Duchess kneeling, quivering with the throbbings of her heart. He said some word, and his three friends vanished.

The women of Paris salons knew how one mirror reflects another. The Duchess, with every motive for reading the depths of Armand's heart, was all eyes; and Armand, all unsuspicious of the mirror, brushed away two tears as they fell. Her whole future lay in those two tears. When he turned round again to help her to rise, she was standing before him, sure of love. Her pulses must have throbbed fast when he spoke with the firmness she had known so well how to use of old while she played with him.

"I spare you, madame. All that has taken place shall be as if it had never been, you may believe me. But now, let us bid each other good-by. I like to think that you were sincere in your coquetries on your sofa, sincere again in this outpouring of your heart. Good-by. I feel that there is no faith in you left in me. You would torment me again; you would always be the Duchess, and— But there, good-by, we shall never understand each other.

"Now, what do you wish?" he continued, taking the tone of a master of the ceremonies—"to return home, or to go back to Mme. de Sérizy's ball? I have done all in my power to prevent any scandal. Neither your servants nor any one else can possibly know what has passed between us in the last quarter of an hour. Your servants have no idea that

you have left the ballroom; your carriage never left Mme. de Sérizy's courtyard; your brougham may likewise be found in the court of your own hotel. Where do you wish to be?"

"What do you counsel, Armand?"

"There is no Armand now, Mme. la Duchesse. We are strangers to each other."

"Then take me to the ball," she said, still curious to put Armand's power to the test. "Thrust a soul that suffered in the world, and must always suffer there, if there is no happiness for her now, down into hell again. And yet, oh my friend, I love you as your bourgeoises love; I love you so that I could come to you and fling my arms about your neck before all the world if you asked it of me. The hateful world has not corrupted me. I am young at least, and I have grown younger still. I am a child, yes, your child, your new creature. Ah! do not drive me forth out of my Eden!"

Armand shook his head.

"Ah! let me take something with me, if I go, some little thing to wear to-night on my heart," she said, taking possession of Armand's glove, which she twisted into her handkerchief.

"No, I am *not* like all those depraved women. You do not know the world, and so you cannot know my worth. You shall know it now! There are women who sell themselves for money; there are others to be gained by gifts, it is a vile world! Oh, I wish I were a simple bourgeoise, a working girl, if you would rather have a woman beneath you than a woman whose devotion is accompanied by high rank, as men count it. Oh, my Armand, there are noble, high, and chaste and pure natures among us; and then they are lovely indeed. I would have all nobleness that I might offer it all up to you. Misfortune willed that I should be a duchess; I would I were a royal princess, that my offering might be complete. I would be a grisette for you, and a queen for every one besides."

He listened, damping his cigar with his lips.

"You will let me know when you wish to go," he said.

"But I should like to stay—"

"That is another matter!"

"Stay, that was badly rolled," she cried, seizing on a cigar and devouring all that Armand's lips had touched.

"Do you smoke?"

"Oh, what would I not do to please you?"

"Very well. Go, madame."

"I will obey you," she answered, with tears in her eyes.

"You must be blindfolded; you must not see a glimpse of the way."

"I am ready, Armand," she said, bandaging her eyes.

"Can you see?"

"No."

Noiselessly he knelt before her.

"Ah! I can hear you!" she cried, with a little fond gesture, thinking that the pretence of harshness was over.

He made as if he would kiss her lips; she held up her face.

"You can see, madame."

"I am just a little bit curious."

"So you always deceive me?"

"Ah! take off this handkerchief, sir," she cried out, with the passion of a great generosity repelled with scorn, "lead me; I will not open my eyes."

Armand felt sure of her after that cry. He led the way; the Duchess, nobly true to her word, was blind. But while Montriveau held her hand as a father might, and led her up and down flights of stairs, he was studying the throbbing pulses of this woman's heart so suddenly invaded by Love. Mme. de Langeais, rejoicing in this power of speech, was glad to let him know all; but he was inflexible; his hand was passive in reply to the questionings of her hand.

At length, after some journey made together, Armand bade her go forward; the opening was doubtless narrow, for as she went she felt that his hand protected her dress. His care touched her; it was a revelation surely that there was

a little love still left; yet it was in some sort a farewell, for Montriveau left her without a word. The air was warm; the Duchess, feeling the heat, opened her eyes, and found herself standing by the fire in the Comtesse de Sérizy's boudoir. She was alone. Her first thought was for her disordered toilet; in a moment she had adjusted her dress and restored her picturesque coiffure.

"Well, dear Antoinette, we have been looking for you everywhere." It was the Comtesse de Sérizy who spoke as she opened the door.

"I came here to breathe," said the Duchess; "it is unbearably hot in the rooms."

"People thought that you had gone; but my brother Ronquerolles told me that your servants were waiting for you."

"I am tired out, dear, let me stay and rest here for a minute," and the Duchess sat down on the sofa.

"Why, what is the matter with you? You are shaking from head to foot!"

The Marquis de Ronquerolles came in.

"Mme. la Duchesse, I was afraid that something might have happened. I have just come across your coachman, the man is as tipsy as all the Swiss in Switzerland."

The Duchess made no answer; she was looking round the room, at the chimney-piece and the tall mirrors, seeking the trace of an opening. Then with an extraordinary sensation she recollected that she was again in the midst of the gayety of the ballroom after that terrific scene which had changed the whole course of her life. She began to shiver violently.

"M. de Montriveau's prophecy has shaken my nerves," she said. "It was a joke, but still I will see whether his axe from London will haunt me even in my sleep. So good-by, dear.—Good-by, M. le Marquis."

As she went through the rooms she was beset with inquiries and regrets. Her world seemed to have dwindled now that she, its queen, had fallen so low, was so diminished. And what, moreover, were these men compared with

him whom she loved with all her heart; with the man grown great by all that she had lost in stature? The giant had regained the height that he had lost for a while, and she exaggerated it perhaps beyond measure. She looked, in spite of herself, at the servant who had attended her to the ball. He was fast asleep.

"Have you been here all the time?" she asked.

"Yes, madame."

As she took her seat in her carriage she saw, in fact, that her coachman was drunk—so drunk that at any other time she would have been afraid; but after a great crisis in life, fear loses its appetite for common food. She reached home, at any rate, without accident; but even there she felt a change in herself, a new feeling that she could not shake off. For her, there was now but one man in the world; which is to say, that henceforth she cared to shine for his sake alone.

While the physiologist can define love promptly by following out natural laws, the moralist finds a far more perplexing problem before him if he attempts to consider love in all its developments due to social conditions. Still, in spite of the heresies of the endless sects that divide the church of Love, there is one broad and trenchant line of difference in doctrine, a line that all the discussion in the world can never deflect. A rigid application of this line explains the nature of the crisis through which the Duchess, like most women, was to pass. Passion she knew, but she did not love as yet.

Love and passion are two different conditions which poets and men of the world, philosophers and fools, alike continually confound. Love implies a give and take, a certainty of bliss that nothing can change; it means so close a clinging of the heart, and an exchange of happiness so constant, that there is no room left for jealousy. Then possession is a means and not an end; unfaithfulness may give pain, but the bond is not less close; the soul is neither more nor less ardent or troubled, but happy at every moment; in short,

the divine breath of desire spreading from end to end of the immensity of Time steeps it all for us in the self-same hue; life takes the tint of the unclouded heaven. But Passion is the foreshadowing of Love, and of that Infinite to which all suffering souls aspire. Passion is a hope that may be cheated. Passion means both suffering and transition. Passion dies out when hope is dead. Men and women may pass through this experience many times without dishonor, for it is so natural to spring toward happiness; but there is only one love in a lifetime. All discussions of sentiment ever conducted on paper or by word of mouth may therefore be resumed by two questions: "Is it passion? Is it love?" So, since love comes into existence only through the intimate experience of the bliss which gives it lasting life, the Duchess was beneath the yoke of passion as yet; and as she knew the fierce tumult, the unconscious calculations, the fevered cravings, and all that is meant by that word *passion*—she suffered. Through all the trouble of her soul there rose eddying gusts of tempest, raised by vanity or self-love, or pride or a high spirit; for all these forms of egoism make common cause together.

She had said to this man, "I love you; I am yours!" Was it possible that the Duchesse de Langeais should have uttered those words—in vain? She must either be loved now or play her part of queen no longer. And then she felt the loneliness of the luxurious couch where pleasure had never yet set his glowing feet; and over and over again, while she tossed and writhed there, she said, "I want to be loved."

But the belief that she still had in herself gave her hope of success. The Duchess might be piqued, the vain Parisienne might be humiliated; but the woman saw glimpses of wedded happiness, and imagination, avenging the time lost for nature, took a delight in kindling the inextinguishable fire in her veins. She all but attained to the sensations of love; for amid her poignant doubt whether she was loved in return, she felt glad at heart to say to herself, "I love

him!" As for her scruples, religion, and the world, she could trample them under foot! Montriveau was her religion now. She spent the next day in a state of moral torpor, troubled by a physical unrest, which no words could express. She wrote letters and tore them all up, and invented a thousand impossible fancies.

When M. de Montriveau's usual hour arrived, she tried to think that he would come, and enjoyed the feeling of expectation. Her whole life was concentrated in the single sense of hearing. Sometimes she shut her eyes, straining her ears to listen through space, wishing that she could annihilate everything that lay between her and her lover, and so establish that perfect silence which sounds may traverse from afar. In her tense self-concentration, the ticking of the clock grew hateful to her; she stopped its ill-omened garrulity. The twelve strokes of midnight sounded from the drawing-room.

"Ah, God!" she cried, "to see him here would be happiness. And yet, it is not so very long since he came here, brought by desire, and the tones of his voice filled this boudoir. And now there is nothing."

She remembered the times that she had played the coquette with him, and how that her coquetry had cost her her lover, and the despairing tears flowed for long.

Her woman came at length with, "Mme. la Duchesse does not know, perhaps, that it is two o'clock in the morning; I thought that madame was not feeling well."

"Yes, I am going to bed," said the Duchess, drying her eyes. "But remember, Suzette, never to come in again without orders; I tell you this for the last time."

For a week, Mme. de Langeais went to every house where there was a hope of meeting M. de Montriveau. Contrary to her usual habits, she came early and went late; gave up dancing, and went to the card-tables. Her experiments were fruitless. She did not succeed in getting a glimpse of Armand. She did not dare to utter his name now. One evening, however, in a fit of despair, she spoke to Mme. de Sérizy,

and asked as carelessly as she could, "You must have quarrelled with M. de Montriveau? He is not to be seen at your house now."

The Countess laughed. "So he does not come here either?" she returned. "He is not to be seen anywhere, for that matter. He is interested in some woman, no doubt."

"I used to think that the Marquis de Ronquerolles was one of his friends—" the Duchess began sweetly.

"I have never heard my brother say that he was acquainted with him."

Mme. de Langeais did not reply. Mme. de Sérizy concluded from the Duchess's silence that she might apply the scourge with impunity to a discreet friendship which she had seen, with bitterness of soul, for a long time past.

"So you miss that melancholy personage, do you? I have heard most extraordinary things of him. Wound his feelings, he never comes back, he forgives nothing; and, if you love him, he keeps you in chains. To everything that I said of him, one of those that praise him sky-high would always answer, 'He knows how to love!' People are always telling me that Montriveau would give up all for his friend; that his is a great nature. Pooh! society does not want such tremendous natures. Men of that stamp are all very well at home; let them stay there and leave us to our pleasant littlenesses. What do you say, Antoinette?"

Woman of the world though she was, the Duchess seemed agitated, yet she replied in a natural voice that deceived her fair friend: "I am sorry to miss him. I took a great interest in him, and promised to myself to be his sincere friend. I like great natures, dear friend, ridiculous though you may think it. To give one's self to a fool is a clear confession, is it not, that one is governed wholly by one's senses?"

Mme. de Sérizy's "preferences" had always been for commonplace men; her lover at the moment, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, was a fine, tall man.

After this, the Countess soon took her departure, you may be sure. Mme. de Langeais saw hope in Armand's

withdrawal from the world; she wrote to him at once; it was a humble, gentle letter, surely it would bring him if he loved her still. She sent her footman with it next day. On the servant's return, she asked whether he had given the letter to M. de Montriveau himself, and could not restrain the movement of joy at the affirmative answer. Armand was in Paris! He stayed alone in his house; he did not go out into society! So she was loved! All day long she waited for an answer that never came. Again and again, when impatience grew unbearable, Antoinette found reasons for his delay. Armand felt embarrassed; the reply would come by post; but night came, and she could not deceive herself any longer. It was a dreadful day, a day of pain grown sweet, of intolerable heart-throbs, a day when the heart squanders the very forces of life in riot.

Next day she sent for an answer.

"M. le Marquis sent word that he would call on Mme. la Duchesse," reported Julien.

She fled lest her happiness should be seen in her face, and flung herself on her couch to devour her first sensations.

"He is coming!"

The thought rent her soul. And, in truth, woe unto those for whom suspense is not the most horrible time of tempest, while it increases and multiplies the sweetest joys; for they have nothing in them of that flame which quickens the images of things, giving to them a second existence, so that we cling as closely to the pure essence as to its outward and visible manifestation. What is suspense in love but a constant drawing upon an unfailing hope?—a submission to the terrible scourging of passion, while passion is yet happy, and the disenchantment of reality has not set in. The constant putting forth of strength and longing, called suspense, is surely, to the human soul, as fragrance to the flower that breathes it forth. We soon leave the brilliant, unsatisfying colors of tulips and coreopsis, but we turn again and again to drink in the sweetness of orange blossoms or volkameria —flowers compared separately, each in its own land, to a

betrothed bride, full of love, made fair by the past and future.

The Duchess learned the joys of this new life of hers through the rapture with which she received the scourgings of love. As this change wrought in her, she saw other destinies before her, and a better meaning in the things of life. As she hurried to her dressing-room, she understood what studied adornment and the most minute attention to her toilet mean when these are undertaken for love's sake and not for vanity. Even now this making ready helped her to bear the long time of waiting. A relapse of intense agitation set in when she was dressed; she passed through nervous paroxysms brought on by the dreadful power which sets the whole mind in ferment. Perhaps that power is only a disease, though the pain of it is sweet. The Duchess was dressed and waiting at two o'clock in the afternoon. At half-past eleven that night M. de Montriveau had not arrived. To try to give an idea of the anguish endured by a woman who might be said to be the spoiled child of civilization, would be to attempt to say how many imaginings the heart can condense into one thought. As well endeavor to measure the forces expanded by the soul in a sigh whenever the bell rang; to estimate the drain of life when a carriage rolled past without stopping, and left her prostrate.

"Can he be playing with me?" she said, as the clocks struck midnight.

She grew white; her teeth chattered; she struck her hands together and leaped up and crossed the boudoir, recollecting as she did so how often he had come thither without a summons. But she resigned herself. Had she not seen him grow pale, and start up under the stinging barbs of her irony? Then Mme. de Langeais felt the horror of the woman's appointed lot; a man's is the active part, a woman must wait passively when she loves. If a woman goes beyond her beloved, she makes a mistake which few men can forgive; almost every man would feel that a woman lowers herself by this piece of angelic flattery. But Armand's was

a great nature; he surely must be one of the very few who can repay such exceeding love by love that lasts forever.

"Well, I will make the advance," she told herself, as she tossed on her bed and found no sleep there; "I will go to him. I will not weary myself with holding out a hand to him, but I will hold it out. A man of a thousand will see a promise of love and constancy in every step that a woman takes toward him. Yes, the angels must come down from heaven to reach men; and I wish to be an angel for him."

Next day she wrote. It was a billet of the kind in which the intellects of the ten thousand Sévignés that Paris now can number particularly excel. And yet only a Duchesse de Langeais, brought up by Mme. la Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, could have written that delicious note; no other woman could complain without lowering herself; could spread wings in such a flight without draggling her pinions in humiliation; rise gracefully in revolt; scold without giving offence; and pardon without compromising her personal dignity.

Julien went with the note. Julien, like his kind, was the victim of love's marches and countermarches.

"What did M. de Montriveau reply?" she asked, as indifferently as she could, when the man came back to report himself.

"M. le Marquis requested me to tell Mme. la Duchesse that it was all right."

Oh the dreadful reaction of the soul upon herself! To have her heart stretched on the rack before curious witnesses; yet not to utter a sound, to be forced to keep silence! One of the countless miseries of the rich!

More than three weeks went by. Mme. de Langeais wrote again and again, and no answer came from Montriveau. At last she gave out that she was ill, to gain a dispensation from attendance on the Princess and from social duties. She was only at home to her father the Duc de Navarreins, her aunt the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry,

the old Vidame de Pamiers (her maternal great-uncle), and to her husband's uncle, the Duc de Grandlieu. These persons found no difficulty in believing that the Duchess was ill, seeing that she grew thinner and paler and more dejected every day. The vague ardor of love, the smart of wounded pride, the continual prick of the only scorn that could touch her, the yearnings toward joys that she craved with a vain continual longing—all these things told upon her, mind and body; all the forces of her nature were stimulated to no purpose. She was paying the arrears of her life of make-believe.

She went out at last to a review. M. de Montriveau was to be there. For the Duchess, on the balcony of the Tuileries with the Royal Family, it was one of those festival days that are long remembered. She looked supremely beautiful in her languor; she was greeted with admiration in all eyes. It was Montriveau's presence that made her so fair. Once or twice they exchanged glances. The General came almost to her feet in all the glory of that soldier's uniform, which produces an effect upon the feminine imagination to which the most prudish will confess. When a woman is very much in love, and has not seen her lover for two months, such a swift moment must be something like the phase of a dream when the eyes embrace a world that stretches away forever. Only women or young men can imagine the dull, frenzied hunger in the Duchess's eyes. As for older men, if during the paroxysms of early passion in youth they had experience of such phenomena of nervous power; at a later day it is so completely forgotten that they deny the very existence of the luxuriant ecstasy—the only name that can be given to these wonderful intuitions. Religious ecstasy is the aberration of a soul that has shaken off its bonds of flesh; whereas in amorous ecstasy all the forces of soul and body are embraced and blended in one. If a woman falls a victim to the tyrannous frenzy before which Mme. de Langeais was forced to bend, she will take one decisive resolution after

another so swiftly that it is impossible to give account of them. Thought after thought rises and flits across her brain, as clouds are whirled by the wind across the gray veil of mist that shuts out the sun. Thenceforth the facts reveal all. And the facts are these.

The day after the review, Mme. de Langeais sent her carriage and liveried servants to wait at the Marquis de Montriveau's door from eight o'clock in the morning till three in the afternoon. Armand lived in the Rue de Tournon, a few steps away from the Chamber of Peers, and that very day the House was sitting; but long before the peers returned to their palaces, several people had recognized the Duchess's carriage and liveries. The first of these was the Baron de Maulincour. That young officer had met with disdain from Mme. de Langeais and a better reception from Mme. de Sérizy; he betook himself at once therefore to his mistress, and under seal of secrecy told her of this strange freak.

In a moment the news was spread with telegraphic speed through all the coteries in the Faubourg Saint-Germain; it reached the Tuileries and the Élysee-Bourbon; it was the sensation of the day, the matter of all the talk from noon till night. Almost everywhere the women denied the facts, but in such a manner that the report was confirmed; the men one and all believed it, and manifested a most indulgent interest in Mme. de Langeais. Some among them threw the blame on Armand.

"That savage of a Montriveau is a man of bronze," said they; "he insisted on making this scandal, no doubt."

"Very well, then," others replied, "Mme. de Langeais has been guilty of a most generous piece of imprudence. To renounce the world, and rank, and fortune, and consideration for her lover's sake, and that in the face of all Paris, is as fine a *coup d'état* for a woman as that barber's knife-thrust, which so affected Canning in a court of assize. Not one of the women who blame the Duchess would make a declaration worthy of ancient times. It is heroic of Mme.

de Langeais to proclaim herself so frankly. Now there is nothing left to her but to love Montriveau. There must be something great about a woman if she says, 'I will have but one passion.' "

"But what is to become of society, monsieur, if you honor vice in this way without respect for virtue?" asked the Comtesse de Granville, the attorney-general's wife.

While the Chateau, the Faubourg, and the Chaussée d'Antin were discussing the shipwreck of aristocratic virtue; while excited young men rushed about on horseback to make sure that the carriage was standing in the Rue de Tournon, and the Duchess in consequence was beyond a doubt in M. de Montriveau's rooms, Mme. de Langeais, with heavy throbbing pulses, was lying hidden away in her boudoir. And Armand?—he had been out all night, and at that moment was walking with M. de Marsay in the Gardens of the Tuileries. The elder members of Mme. de Langeais's family were engaged in calling upon one another, arranging to read her a homily and to hold a consultation as to the best way of putting a stop to the scandal.

At three o'clock, therefore, M. le Duc de Navarreins, the Vidame de Pamiers, the old Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, and the Duc de Grandlieu were assembled in Mme. la Duchesse de Langeais's drawing-room. To them, as to all curious inquirers, the servants said that their mistress was not at home; the Duchess had made no exceptions to her orders. But these four personages shone conspicuous in that lofty sphere, of which the revolutions and hereditary pretensions are solemnly recorded year by year in the "Almanach de Gotha," wherefore without some slight sketch of each of them this picture of society were incomplete.

The Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, in the feminine world, was a most poetic wreck of the reign of Louis Quinze. In her beautiful prime, so it was said, she had done her part to win for that monarch his appellation of *le Bien-aimé*. Of her past charms of feature, little remained save a remarkably prominent slender nose, curved like a

Turkish cimetar, now the principal ornament of a countenance that put you in mind of an old white glove. Add a few powdered curls, high-heeled pantoufles, a cap with upstanding loops of lace, black mittens, and a decided taste for *ombre*. But to do full justice to the lady, it must be said that she appeared in low-necked gowns of an evening (so high an opinion of her ruins had she), wore long gloves, and raddled her cheeks with Martin's classic rouge. An appalling amiability in her wrinkles, a prodigious brightness in the old lady's eyes, a profound dignity in her whole person, together with the triple-barbed wit of her tongue, and an infallible memory in her head, made of her a real power in the land. The whole Cabinet des Chartes was entered in duplicate on the parchment of her brain. She knew all the genealogies of every noble house in Europe—princes, dukes, and counts—and could put her hand on the last descendants of Charlemagne in the direct line. No usurpation of title could escape the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry.

Young men who wished to stand well at Court, ambitious men, and young married women paid her assiduous homage. Her salon set the tone of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The words of this Talleyrand in petticoats were taken as final decrees. People came to consult her on questions of etiquette or usages, or to take lessons in good taste. And, in truth, no other old woman could put back her snuff-box in her pocket as the Princess could; while there was a precision and a grace about the movements of her skirts, when she sat down or crossed her feet, which drove the finest ladies of the young generation to despair. Her voice had remained in her head during one-third of her lifetime; but she could not prevent a descent into the membranes of the nose, which lent to it a peculiar expressiveness. She still retained a hundred and fifty thousand livres of her great fortune, for Napoleon had generously returned her woods to her; so that personally and in the matter of possessions she was a woman of no little consequence.

This curious antique, seated in a low chair by the fire-

side, was chatting with the Vidame de Pamiers, a contemporary ruin. The Vidame was a big, tall, and spare man, a *seigneur* of the old school, and had been a Commander of the Order of Malta. His neck had always been so tightly compressed by a strangulation stock that his cheeks pouched over it a little, and he held his head high; to many people this would have given an air of self-sufficiency, but in the Vidame it was justified by a Voltairean wit. His wide prominent eyes seemed to see everything, and as a matter of fact there was not much that they had not seen. Altogether, his person was a perfect model of aristocratic outline, slim and slender, supple and agreeable. He seemed as if he could be pliant or rigid at will, and twist and bend, or rear his head like a snake.

The Duc de Navarreins was pacing up and down the room with the Duc de Grandlieu. Both were men of fifty-six or thereabout, and still hale; both were short, corpulent, flourishing, somewhat florid-complexioned men with jaded eyes, and lower lips that had begun to hang already. But for an exquisite refinement of accent, an urbane courtesy, and an ease of manner that could change in a moment to insolence, a superficial observer might have taken them for a couple of bankers. Any such mistake would have been impossible, however, if the listener could have heard them converse, and seen them on their guard with men whom they feared, vapid and commonplace with their equals, slippery with the inferiors whom courtiers and statesmen know how to tame by a tactful word, or to humiliate with an unexpected phrase.

Such were the representatives of the great noblesse that determined to perish rather than submit to any change. It was a noblesse that deserved praise and blame in equal measure; a noblesse that will never be judged impartially until some poet shall arise to tell how joyfully the nobles obeyed the King though their heads fell under a Richelieu's axe, and how deeply they scorned the guillotine of '89 as a foul revenge.

Another noticeable trait in all the four was a thin voice that agreed peculiarly well with their ideas and bearing. Among themselves, at any rate, they were on terms of perfect equality. None of them betrayed any sign of annoyance over the Duchess's escapade, but all of them had learned at Court to hide their feelings.

And here, lest critics should condemn the puerility of the opening of the forthcoming scene, it is perhaps as well to remind the reader that Locke, once happening to be in the company of several great lords, renowned no less for their wit than for their breeding and political consistency, wickedly amused himself by taking down their conversation by some shorthand process of his own; and afterward, when he read it over to them to see what they could make of it, they all burst out laughing. And, in truth, the tinsel jargon which circulates among the upper ranks in every country yields mighty little gold to the crucible when washed in the ashes of literature or philosophy. In every rank of society (some few Parisian salons excepted) the curious observer finds folly a constant quantity beneath a more or less transparent varnish. Conversation with any substance in it is a rare exception, and bœotianism is current coin in every zone. In the higher regions they must perforce talk more, but to make up for it they think the less. Thinking is a tiring exercise, and the rich like their lives to flow by easily and without effort. It is by comparing the fundamental matter of jests, as you rise in the social scale from the street-boy to the peer of France, that the observer arrives at a true comprehension of M. de Talleyrand's maxim, "The manner is everything"; an elegant rendering of the legal axiom, "The form is of more consequence than the matter." In the eyes of the poet the advantage rests with the lower classes, for they seldom fail to give a certain character of rude poetry to their thoughts. Perhaps also this same observation may explain the sterility of the salons, their emptiness, their shallowness, and the repugnance felt by men of ability for bartering their ideas for such pitiful small change.

The Duke suddenly stopped as if some bright idea occurred to him, and remarked to his neighbor: "So you have sold Tornthon?"

"No, he is ill. I am very much afraid I shall lose him, and I should be uncommonly sorry. He is a very good hunter. Do you know how the Duchesse de Marigny is?"

"No. I did not go this morning. I was just going out to call when you came in to speak about Antoinette. But yesterday she was very ill indeed; they had given her up, she took the sacrament."

"Her death will make a change in your cousin's position."

"Not at all. She gave away her property in her lifetime, only keeping an annuity. She made over the Guébriant estate to her niece, Mme. de Soulanges, subject to a yearly charge."

"It will be a great loss for society. She was a kind woman. Her family will miss her; her experience and advice carried weight. Her son Marigny is an amiable man; he has a sharp wit, he can talk. He is pleasant, very pleasant. Pleasant? oh, that no one can deny, but—ill-regulated to the last degree. Well, and yet it is an extraordinary thing, he is very acute. He was dining at the club the other day with that moneyed Chaussée-d'Antin set. Your uncle (he always goes there for his game of cards) found him there, to his astonishment, and asked if he was a member. 'Yes,' said he, 'I don't go into society now; I am living among the bankers.'—You know why?" added the Marquis, with a meaning smile.

"No," said the Duke.

"He is smitten with that little Mme. Keller, Gondreville's daughter; she is only lately married, and has a great vogue, they say, in that set."

"Well, Antoinette does not find time heavy on her hands, it seems," remarked the Vidame.

"My affection for that little woman has driven me to find a singular pastime," replied the Princess, as she returned her snuff-box to her pocket.

"Dear aunt, I am extremely vexed," said the Duke, stopping short in his walk. "Nobody but one of Bonaparte's men could ask such an indecorous thing of a woman of fashion. Between ourselves, Antoinette might have made a better choice."

"The Montriveaus are a very old family and very well connected, my dear," replied the Princess; "they are related to all the noblest houses of Burgundy. If the Dulmen branch of the Arschoot Rivaudoults should come to an end in Galicia, the Montriveaus would succeed to the Arschoot title and estates. They inherit through their great-grandfather."

"Are you sure?"

"I know it better than this Montriveau's father did. I told him about it, I used to see a good deal of him; and, Chevalier of several orders though he was, he only laughed; he was an encyclopedist. But his brother turned the relationship to good account during the emigration. I have heard it said that his northern kinsfolk were most kind in every way—"

"Yes, to be sure. The Comte de Montriveau died at St. Petersburg," said the Vidame. "I met him there. He was a big man with an incredible passion for oysters."

"How ever many did he eat?" asked the Duc de Grandlieu.

"Ten dozen every day."

"And did they not disagree with him?"

"Not the least bit in the world."

"Why, that is extraordinary! Had he neither the stone nor gout, nor any other complaint, in consequence?"

"No; his health was perfectly good, and he died through an accident."

"By accident! Nature prompted him to eat oysters, so probably he required them; for up to a certain point our predominant tastes are conditions of our existence."

"I am of your opinion," said the Princess, with a smile.

"Madame, you always put a malicious construction on things," returned the Marquis.

"I only want you to understand that these remarks might leave a wrong impression on a young woman's mind," said she, and interrupted herself to exclaim, "But this niece, this niece of mine!"

"Dear aunt, I still refuse to believe that she can have gone to M. de Montriveau," said the Duc de Navarreins.

"Bah!" returned the Princess.

"What do you think, Vidame?" asked the Marquis.

"If the Duchess were an artless simpleton, I should think that—"

"But when a woman is in love she becomes an artless simpleton," retorted the Princess. "Really, my poor Vidame, you must be getting older."

"After all, what is to be done?" asked the Duke.

"If my dear niece is wise," said the Princess, "she will go to Court this evening—fortunately, to-day is Monday, and reception day—and you must see that we all rally round her and give the lie to this absurd rumor. There are hundreds of ways of explaining things; and if the Marquis de Montriveau is a gentleman, he will come to our assistance. We will bring these children to listen to reason—"

"But, dear aunt, it is not easy to tell M. de Montriveau the truth to his face. He is one of Bonaparte's pupils, and he has a position. Why, he is one of the great men of the day; he is high up in the Guards, and very useful there. He has not a spark of ambition. He is just the man to say, 'Here is my commission, leave me in peace.' if the King should say a word that he did not like."

"Then, pray, what are his opinions?"

"Very unsound."

"Really," sighed the Princess, "the King is, as he always has been, a Jacobin under the Lilies of France."

"Oh! not quite so bad," said the Vidame.

"Yes; I have known him for a long while. The man that pointed out the Court to his wife on the occasion of her first state dinner in public with, 'These are our people,' could only be a black-hearted scoundrel. I can see Mon-

sieur exactly the same as ever in the King. The bad brother who voted so wrongly in his department of the Constituent Assembly was sure to compound with the Liberals and allow them to argue and talk. This philosophical cant will be just as dangerous now for the younger brother as it used to be for the elder; this fat man with the little mind is amusing himself by creating difficulties, and how his successor is to get out of them I do not know; he holds his younger brother in abhorrence; he would be glad to think as he lay dying, 'He will not reign very long—'"

"Aunt, he is the King, and I have the honor to be in his service—"

"But does your post take away your right of free speech, my dear? You come of quite as good a house as the Bourbons. If the Guises had shown a little more resolution, His Majesty would be a nobody at this day. It is time I went out of this world, the noblesse is dead. Yes, it is all over with you, my children," she continued, looking as she spoke at the Vidame. "What has my niece done that the whole town should be talking about her? She is in the wrong; I disapprove of her conduct, a useless scandal is a blunder; that is why I still have my doubts about this want of regard for appearances; I brought her up, and I know that—"

Just at that moment the Duchess came out of her boudoir. She had recognized her aunt's voice and heard the name of Montriveau. She was still in her loose morning-gown; and even as she came in, M. de Grandlieu, looking carelessly out of the window, saw his niece's carriage driving back along the street. The Duke took his daughter's face in both hands and kissed her on the forehead. "So, dear girl," he said, "you do not know what is going on?"

"Has anything extraordinary happened, father dear?"

"Why, all Paris believes that you are with M. de Montriveau."

"My dear Antoinette, you were at home all the time, were you not?" said the Princess, holding out a hand, which the Duchess kissed with affectionate respect.

"Yes, dear mother; I was at home all the time. And," she added, as she turned to greet the Vidame and the Marquis, "I wished that all Paris should think that I was with M. de Montriveau."

The Duke flung up his hands, struck them together in despair, and folded his arms.

"Then, cannot you see what will come of this mad freak?" he asked at last.

But the aged Princess had suddenly risen, and stood looking steadily at the Duchess; the younger woman flushed, and her eyes fell. Mme. de Chauvry gently drew her closer, and said, "My little angel, let me kiss you!"

She kissed her niece very affectionately on the forehead, and continued smiling, while she held her hand in a tight clasp.

"We are not under the Valois now, dear child. You have compromised your husband and your position. Still, we will arrange to make everything right."

"But, dear aunt, I do not wish to make it right at all. It is my wish that all Paris should say that I was with M. de Montriveau this morning. If you destroy that belief, however ill grounded it may be, you will do me a singular disservice."

"Do you really wish to ruin yourself, child, and to grieve your family?"

"My family, father, unintentionally condemned me to irreparable misfortune when they sacrificed me to family considerations. You may, perhaps, blame me for seeking alleviations, but you will certainly feel for me."

"After all the endless pains you take to settle your daughters suitably!" muttered M. de Navarreins, addressing the Vidame.

The Princess shook a stray grain of snuff from her skirts. "My dear little girl," she said, "be happy, if you can. We are not talking of troubling your felicity, but of reconciling it with social usages. We all of us here assembled know that marriage is a defective institution tempered by love.

But when you take a lover, is there any need to make your bed in the Place du Carrousel? See now, just be a bit reasonable, and hear what we have to say."

"I am listening."

"Mme. la Duchesse," began the Duc de Grandlieu, "if it were any part of an uncle's duty to look after his nieces, he ought to have a position; society would owe him honors and rewards and a salary, exactly as if he were in the King's service. So I am not here to talk about my nephew, but of your own interests. Let us look ahead a little. If you persist in making a scandal—I have seen the animal before, and I own that I have no great liking for him—Langeais is stingy enough, and he does not care a rap for any one but himself; he will have a separation; he will stick to your money, and leave you poor, and consequently you will be a nobody. The income of a hundred thousand livres that you have just inherited from your maternal great-aunt will go to pay for his mistresses' amusements. You will be bound and gagged by the law; you will have to say Amen to all these arrangements. Suppose M. de Montriveau leaves you—dear me! do not let us put ourselves in a passion, my dear niece; a man does not leave a woman while she is young and pretty; still, we have seen so many pretty women left disconsolate, even among princesses, that you will permit the supposition, an all but impossible supposition I quite wish to believe—Well, suppose that he goes, what will become of you without a husband? Keep well with your husband as you take care of your beauty; for beauty, after all, is a woman's parachute, and a husband also stands between you and worse. I am supposing that you are happy and loved to the end, and I am leaving unpleasant or unfortunate events altogether out of the reckoning. This being so, fortunately or unfortunately, you may have children. What are they to be? Montriveaus? Very well; they certainly will not succeed to their father's whole fortune. You will want to give them all that you have; he will wish to do the same. Nothing more natural, dear me! And you will find the law against you. How

many times have we seen heirs-at-law bringing a lawsuit to recover the property from illegitimate children? Every court of law rings with such actions all over the world. You will create a *fidei commissum* perhaps; and if the trustee betrays your confidence, your children have no remedy against him; and they are ruined. So choose carefully. You see the perplexities of the position. In every possible way your children will be sacrificed of necessity to the fancies of your heart; they will have no recognized status. While they are little they will be charming; but, Lord! some day they will reproach you for thinking of no one but your two selves. We old gentlemen know all about it. Little boys grow up into men, and men are ungrateful beings. When I was in Germany, did I not hear young de Horn say, after supper, 'If my mother had been an honest woman, I should be prince-regnant!' 'If?' We have spent our lives in hearing plebeians say *if*. *If* brought about the Revolution. When a man cannot lay the blame on his father or mother, he holds God responsible for his hard lot. In short, dear child, we are here to open your eyes. I will say all I have to say in a few words, on which you had better meditate: A woman ought never to put her husband in the right."

"Uncle, so long as I cared for nobody, I could calculate; I looked at interests then, as you do; now, I can only feel."

"But, my dear little girl," remonstrated the Vidame, "life is simply a complication of interests and feelings; to be happy, more particularly in your position, one must try to reconcile one's feelings with one's interests. A grisette may love according to her fancy, that is intelligible enough, but you have a pretty fortune, a family, a name and a place at Court, and you ought not to fling them out of the window. And what have we been asking you to do to keep them all? —To manœuvre carefully instead of falling foul of social conventions. Lord! I shall very soon be eighty years old, and I cannot recollect, under any régime, a love worth the price that you are willing to pay for the love of this lucky young man."

The Duchess silenced the Vidame with a look; if Montriveau could have seen that glance, he would have forgiven all.

"It would be very effective on the stage," remarked the Duc de Grandlieu, "but it all amounts to nothing when your jointure and position and independence is concerned. You are not grateful, my dear niece. You will not find many families where the relatives have courage enough to teach the wisdom gained by experience, and to make rash young heads listen to reason. Renounce your salvation in two minutes, if it pleases you to damn yourself; well and good; but reflect well beforehand when it comes to renouncing your income. I know of no confessor who remits the pains of poverty. I have a right, I think, to speak in this way to you; for if you are ruined, I am the one person who can offer you a refuge. I am almost an uncle to Langeais, and I alone have a right to put him in the wrong."

The Duc de Navarreins roused himself from painful reflections.

"Since you speak of feeling, my child," he said, "let me remind you that a woman who bears your name ought to be moved by sentiments which do not touch ordinary people. Can you wish to give an advantage to the Liberals, to those Jesuits of Robespierre's that are doing all they can to vilify the noblesse? Some things a Navarreins cannot do without failing in duty to his house. You would not be alone in your dishonor—"

"Come, come!" said the Princess. "Dishonor? Do not make such a fuss about the journey of an empty carriage, children, and leave me alone with Antoinette. All three of you come and dine with me. I will undertake to arrange matters suitably. You men understand nothing; you are beginning to talk sourly already, and I have no wish to see a quarrel between you and my dear child. Do me the pleasure to go."

The three gentlemen probably guessed the Princess's intentions; they took their leave. M. de Navarreins kissed

his daughter on the forehead with, "Come, be good, dear child. It is not too late yet if you choose."

"Couldn't we find some good fellow in the family to pick a quarrel with this Montriveau?" said the Vidame, as they went downstairs.

When the two women were alone, the Princess beckoned her niece to a little low chair by her side.

"My pearl," said she, "in this world below, I know nothing worse calumniated than God and the Eighteenth Century; for as I look back over my own young days, I do not recollect that a single duchess trampled the proprieties under foot as you have just done. Novelists and scribblers brought the reign of Louis XV. into disrepute. Do not believe them. The du Barry, my dear, was quite as good as the Widow Scarron, and the more agreeable woman of the two. In my time a woman could keep her dignity among her gallantries. Indiscretion was the ruin of us, and the beginning of all the mischief. The philosophists—the nobodies whom we admitted into our salons—had no more gratitude or sense of decency than to make an inventory of our hearts, to traduce us one and all, and to rail against the age by way of a return for our kindness. The people are not in a position to judge of anything whatsoever; they looked at the facts, not at the form. But the men and women of those times, my heart, were quite as remarkable as at any other period of the Monarchy. Not one of your Werthers, none of your notabilities, as they are called, never a one of your men in yellow kid gloves and trousers that disguise the poverty of their legs, would cross Europe in the dress of a travelling hawker to brave the daggers of a Duke of Modena, and to shut himself up in the dressing-room of the Regent's daughter at the risk of his life. Not one of your little consumptive patients with their tortoise-shell eyeglasses would hide himself in a closet for six weeks, like Lauzun, to keep up his mistress's courage while she was lying-in of her child. There was more passion in M. de Jaucourt's little finger than in your whole race of higglers that leave a woman to better

themselves elsewhere! Just tell me where to find the page that would be cut in pieces and buried under the floor boards for one kiss on the Königsmark's gloved finger!

"Really, it would seem to-day that the rôles are exchanged, and women are expected to show their devotion for men. These modern gentlemen are worth less, and think more of themselves. Believe me, my dear, all these adventures that have been made public, and now are turned against our good Louis XV., were kept quite secret at first. If it had not been for a pack of poetasters, scribblers, and moralists, who hung about our waiting-women, and took down their slanders, our epoch would have appeared in literature as a well-conducted age. I am justifying the century and not its fringe. Perhaps a hundred women of quality were lost; but for every one, the rogues set down ten, like the gazettes after a battle when they count up the losses of the beaten side. And in any case I do not know that the Revolution and the Empire can reproach us; they were coarse, dull, licentious times. Faugh! it is revolting. Those are the brothels of French history.

"This preamble, my dear child," she continued after a pause, "brings me to the thing that I have to say. If you care for Montriveau, you are quite at liberty to love him at your ease, and as much as you can. I know by experience that, unless you are locked up (but locking people up is out of fashion now), you will do as you please; I should have done the same at your age. Only, sweetheart, I should not have given up my right to be the mother of future Ducs de Langeais. So mind appearances. The Vidame is right. No man is worth a single one of the sacrifices which we are foolish enough to make for their love. Put yourself in such a position that you may still be M. de Langeais's wife, in case you should have the misfortune to repent. When you are an old woman, you will be very glad to hear mass said at Court, and not in some provincial convent. Therein lies the whole question. A single imprudence means an allowance and a wandering life; it means

that you are at the mercy of your lover; it means that you must put up with insolence from women that are not so honest, precisely because they have been very vulgarly sharp-witted. It would be a hundred times better to go to Montriveau's at night in a cab, and disguised, instead of sending your carriage in broad daylight. You are a little fool, my dear child! Your carriage flattered his vanity; your person would have insnared his heart. All this that I have said is just and true; but, for my own part, I do not blame you. You are two centuries behind the times with your false ideas of greatness. There, leave us to arrange your affairs, and say that Montriveau made your servants drunk to gratify his vanity and to compromise you—"

The Duchess rose to her feet with a spring. "In Heaven's name, aunt, do not slander him!"

The old Princess's eyes flashed.

"Dear child," she said, "I should have liked to spare such of your illusions as were not fatal. But there must be an end of all illusions now. You would soften me if I were not so old. Come, now, do not vex him, or us, or any one else. I will undertake to satisfy everybody; but promise me not to permit yourself a single step henceforth until you have consulted me. Tell me all, and perhaps I may bring it all right again."

"Aunt, I promise—"

"To tell me everything?"

"Yes, everything. Everything that can be told."

"But, my sweetheart, it is precisely what cannot be told that I want to know. Let us understand each other thoroughly. Come, let me put my withered old lips on your beautiful forehead. No; let me do as I wish. I forbid you to kiss my bones. Old people have a courtesy of their own. . . . There, take me down to my carriage," she added, when she had kissed her niece.

"Then may I go to him in disguise, dear aunt?"

"Why—yes. The story can always be denied," said the old Princess.

This was the one idea which the Duchess had clearly grasped in the sermon. When Mme. de Chauvry was seated in the corner of her carriage, Mme. de Langeais bade her a graceful adieu and went up to her room. She was quite happy again.

"My person would have snared his heart; my aunt is right; a man cannot surely refuse a pretty woman when she understands how to offer herself."

That evening, at the Elysée-Bourbon, the Duc de Navarreins, M. de Pamiers, M. de Marsay, M. de Grandlieu, and the Duc de Maufrigneuse triumphantly refuted the scandals that were circulating with regard to the Duchesse de Langeais. So many officers and other persons had seen Montriveau walking in the Tuileries that morning that the silly story was set down to chance, which takes all that is offered. And so, in spite of the fact that the Duchess's carriage had waited before Montriveau's door, her character became as clear and as spotless as Mambrino's sword after Sancho had polished it up.

But, at two o'clock, M. de Ronquerolles passed Montriveau in a deserted alley, and said with a smile, "She is coming on, is your Duchess. Go on, keep it up!" he added, and gave a significant cut of the riding whip to his mare, who sped off like a bullet down the avenue.

Two days after the fruitless scandal, Mme. de Langeais wrote to M. de Montriveau. That letter, like the preceding ones, remained unanswered. This time she took her own measures, and bribed M. de Montriveau's man, Auguste. And so at eight o'clock that evening she was introduced into Armand's apartment. It was not the room in which that secret scene had passed; it was entirely different. The Duchess was told that the General would not be at home that night. Had he two houses? The man would give no answer. Mme. de Langeais had bought the key of the room, but not the man's whole loyalty.

When she was left alone she saw her fourteen letters lying on an old-fashioned stand, all of them uncreased and

unopened. He had not read them. She sank into an easy-chair, and for a while she lost consciousness. When she came to herself, Auguste was holding vinegar for her to inhale.

"A carriage; quick!" she ordered.

The carriage came. She hastened downstairs with convulsive speed, and left orders that no one was to be admitted. For twenty-four hours she lay in bed, and would have no one near her but her woman, who brought her a cup of orange-flower water from time to time. Suzette heard her mistress moan once or twice, and caught a glimpse of tears in the brilliant eyes, now circled with dark shadows.

The next day, amid despairing tears, Mme. de Langeais took her resolution. Her man of business came for an interview, and no doubt received instructions of some kind. Afterward she sent for the Vidame de Pamiers; and while she waited, she wrote a letter to M. de Montriveau. The Vidame punctually came toward two o'clock that afternoon, to find his young cousin looking white and worn, but resigned; never had her divine loveliness been more poetic than now in the languor of her agony.

"You owe this assignation to your eighty-four years, dear cousin," she said. "Ah! do not smile, I beg of you, when an unhappy woman has reached the lowest depths of wretchedness. You are a gentleman, and after the adventures of your youth you must feel some indulgence for women."

"None whatever," said he.

"Indeed!"

"Everything is in their favor."

"Ah! Well, you are one of the inner family circle; possibly you will be the last relative, the last friend whose hand I shall press, so I can ask your good offices. Will you, dear Vidame, do me a service which I could not ask of my own father, nor of my uncle Grandlieu, nor of any woman? You cannot fail to understand. I beg of you to do my bidding, and then to forget what you have done, whatever may come of it. It is this: Will you take this letter and go to M. de

Montriveau? will you see him yourself, give it into his hands, and ask him, as you men can ask things between yourselves—for you have a code of honor between man and man which you do not use with us, and a different way of regarding things between yourselves—ask him if he will read this letter? Not in your presence. Certain feelings men hide from each other. I give you authority to say, if you think it necessary to bring him, that it is a question of life or death for me. If he deigns—"

"*Deigns!*" repeated the Vidame.

"If he deigns to read it," the Duchess continued with dignity, "say one thing more. You will go to see him about five o'clock, for I know that he will dine at home to-day at that time. Very good. By way of answer he must come to see me. If, three hours afterward, by eight o'clock, he does not leave his house, all will be over. The Duchesse de Langeais will have vanished from the world. I shall not be dead, dear friend, no, but no human power will ever find me again on this earth. Come and dine with me; I shall at least have one friend with me in the last agony. Yes, dear cousin, to-night will decide my fate; and whatever happens to me, I pass through an ordeal by fire. There! not a word. I will hear nothing of the nature of comment or advice—Let us chat and laugh together," she added, holding out a hand, which he kissed. "We will be like two gray-headed philosophers who have learned how to enjoy life to the last moment. I will look my best; I will be very enchanting for you. You perhaps will be the last man to set eyes on the Duchesse de Langeais."

The Vicomte bowed, took the letter, and went without a word. At five o'clock he returned. His cousin had studied to please him, and she looked lovely indeed. The room was gay with flowers as if for a festivity; the dinner was exquisite. For the gray-headed Vidame the Duchess displayed all the brilliancy of her wit; she was more charming than she had ever been before. At first the Vidame tried to look on all these preparations as a young woman's jest; but now

and again the attempted illusion faded, the spell of his fair cousin's charm was broken. He detected a shudder caused by some kind of sudden dread, and once she seemed to listen during a pause.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Hush!" she said.

At seven o'clock the Duchess left him for a few minutes. When she came back again she was dressed as her maid might have dressed for a journey. She asked her guest to be her escort, took his arm, sprang into a hackney coach, and by a quarter to eight they stood outside M. de Montriveau's door.

Armand meantime had been reading the following letter:

"My Friend—I went to your rooms for a few minutes without your knowledge; I found my letters there, and took them away. This cannot be indifference, Armand, between us; and hatred would show itself quite differently. If you love me, make an end of this cruel play, or you will kill me, and afterward, learning how much you were loved, you might be in despair. If I have not rightly understood you, if you have no feeling toward me but aversion, which implies both contempt and disgust, then I give up all hope. A man never recovers from those feelings. You will have no regrets. Dreadful though that thought may be, it will comfort me in my long sorrow. Regrets? Oh! my Armand, may I never know of them; if I thought that I had caused you a single regret— But, no, I will not tell you what desolation I should feel. I should be living still, and I could not be your wife; it would be too late!

"Now that I have given myself wholly to you in thought, to whom else should I give myself?—to God. The eyes that you loved for a little while shall never look on another man's face; and may the glory of God blind them to all besides. I shall never hear human voices more since I heard yours—so gentle at the first, so terrible yesterday; for it seems to me that I am still only on the morrow of your vengeance. And

now may the will of God consume me. Between His wrath and yours, my friend, there will be nothing left for me but a little space for tears and prayers.

"Perhaps you wonder why I write to you? Ah! do not think ill of me if I keep a gleam of hope, and give one last sigh to happy life before I take leave of it forever. I am in a hideous position. I feel all the inward serenity that comes when a great resolution has been taken, even while I hear the last growlings of the storm. When you went out on that terrible adventure which so drew me to you, Armand, you went from the desert to the oasis with a good guide to show you the way. Well, I am going out of the oasis into the desert, and you are a pitiless guide to me. And yet you only, my friend, can understand how melancholy it is to look back for the last time on happiness—to you, and you only, I can make moan without a blush. If you grant my entreaty, I shall be happy; if you are inexorable. I shall expiate the wrong that I have done. After all, it is natural, is it not, that a woman should wish to live, invested with all noble feelings, in her friend's memory? Oh! my one and only love, let her to whom you gave life go down into the tomb in the belief that she is great in your eyes. Your harshness led me to reflect; and now that I love you so, it seems to me that I am less guilty than you think. Listen to my justification, I owe it to you; and you that are all the world to me, owe me at least a moment's justice.

"I have learned by my own anguish all that I made you suffer by my coquetry; but in those days I was utterly ignorant of love. *You* know what the torture is, and you mete it out to me! During those first eight months that you gave me you never roused any feeling of love in me. Do you ask why this was so, my friend? I can no more explain it than I can tell you why I love you now. Oh! certainly it flattered my vanity that I should be the subject of your passionate talk, and receive those burning glances of yours; but you left me cold. No, I was not a woman; I had no conception of womanly devotion and happiness. Who was to blame?

You would have despised me, would you not, if I had given myself without the impulse of passion? Perhaps it is the highest height to which we can rise—to give all and receive no joy; perhaps there is no merit in yielding one's self to bliss that is foreseen and ardently desired. Alas, my friend, I can say this now; these thoughts came to me when I played with you; and you seemed to me so great even then that I would not have you owe the gift to pity— What is this that I have written?

"I have taken back all my letters; I am flinging them one by one on the fire; they are burning. You will never know what they confessed—all the love and the passion and the madness—

"I will say no more, Armand; I will stop. I will not say another word of my feelings. If my prayers have not echoed from my soul through yours, I also, woman that I am, decline to owe your love to your pity. It is my wish to be loved, because you cannot choose but love me, or else to be left without mercy. If you refuse to read this letter, it shall be burned. If, after you have read it, you do not come to me within three hours, to be henceforth forever my husband, the one man in the world for me; then I shall never blush to know that this letter is in your hands, the pride of my despair will protect my memory from all insult, and my end shall be worthy of my love. When you see me no more on earth, albeit I shall still be alive, you yourself will not think without a shudder of the woman who, in three hours' time, will live only to overwhelm you with her tenderness; a woman consumed by a hopeless love, and faithful—not to memories of past joys—but to a love that was slighted.

"The Duchesse de la Vallière wept for lost happiness and vanished power; but the Duchesse de Langeais will be happy that she may weep and be a power for you still. Yes, you will regret me. I see clearly that I was not of this world, and I thank you for making it clear to me.

"Farewell; you will never touch *my* axe. Yours was the executioner's axe, mine is God's; yours kills, mine saves.

Your love was but mortal, it could not endure disdain or ridicule; mine can endure all things without growing weaker, it will last eternally. Ah! I feel a sombre joy in crushing you that believe yourself so great; in humbling you with the calm, indulgent smile of one of the least among the angels that lie at the feet of God, for to them is given the right and the power to protect and watch over men in His name. You have but felt fleeting desires, while the poor nun will shed the light of her ceaseless and ardent prayer about you, she will shelter you all your life long beneath the wings of a love that has nothing of earth in it.

"I have a presentiment of your answer; our trysting-place shall be—in heaven. Strength and weakness can both enter there, dear Armand; the strong and the weak are bound to suffer. This thought soothes the anguish of my final ordeal. So calm am I that I should fear that I had ceased to love you if I were not about to leave the world for your sake.

"ANTOINETTE."

"Dear Vidame," said the Duchess as they reached Montriveau's house, "do me the kindness to ask at the door whether he is at home."

The Vidame, obedient after the manner of the eighteenth century to a woman's wish, got out, and came back to bring his cousin an affirmative answer that sent a shudder through her. She grasped his hand tightly in hers, suffered him to kiss her on either cheek, and begged him to go at once. He must not watch her movements nor try to protect her.

"But the people passing in the street," he objected.

"No one can fail in respect to me," she said. It was the last word spoken by the Duchess and the woman of fashion.

The Vidame went. Mme. de Langeais wrapped herself about in her cloak, and stood on the doorstep until the clocks struck eight. The last stroke died away. The unhappy woman waited ten, fifteen minutes; to the last she tried to see a fresh humiliation in the delay, then her faith ebbed. She turned to leave the fatal threshold.

"Oh, God!" the cry broke from her in spite of herself; it was the first word spoken by the Carmelite.

Montriveau and some of his friends were talking together. He tried to hasten them to a conclusion, but his clock was slow, and by the time he started out for the Hotel de Langeais the Duchess was hurrying on foot through the streets of Paris, goaded by the dull rage in her heart. She reached the Boulevard d'Enfer, and looked out for the last time through falling tears on the noisy, smoky city that lay below in a red mist, lighted up by its own lamps. Then she hailed a cab and drove away, never to return.

When the Marquis de Montriveau reached the Hotel de Langeais, and found no trace of his mistress, he thought that he had been duped. He hurried away at once to the Vidame, and found that worthy gentleman in the act of slipping on his flowered dressing-gown, thinking the while of his fair cousin's happiness. Montriveau gave him one of the terrific glances that produced the effect of an electric shock on men and women alike.

"Is it possible that you have lent yourself to some cruel hoax, monsieur?" Montriveau exclaimed. "I have just come from Mme. de Langeais's house; the servants say that she is out."

"Then a great misfortune has happened, no doubt," returned the Vidame, "and through your fault. I left the Duchess at your door—"

"When?"

"At a quarter to eight."

"Good-evening," returned Montriveau, and he hurried home to ask the porter whether he had seen a lady standing on the doorstep that evening.

"Yes, my Lord Marquis, a handsome woman, who seemed very much put out. She was crying like a Magdalen, but she never made a sound, and stood as upright as a post. Then at last she went, and my wife and I that were watching her while she could not see us, heard her say, 'Oh, God!'

so that it went to our hearts, asking your pardon, to hear her say it."

Montriveau, in spite of all his firmness, turned pale at those few words. He wrote a few lines to Ronquerolles, sent off the message at once, and went up to his rooms. Ronquerolles came just about midnight.

Armand gave him the Duchess's letter to read.

"Well?" asked Ronquerolles.

"She was here at my door at eight o'clock; at a quarter-past eight she had gone. I have lost her, and I love her. Oh! if my life were my own, I could blow my brains out."

"Pooh, pooh! Keep cool," said Ronquerolles. "Duchesses do not fly off like wagtails. She cannot travel faster than three leagues an hour, and to-morrow we will ride six.—Confound it! Mme. de Langeais is no ordinary woman," he continued. "To-morrow we will all of us mount and ride. The police will put us on her track during the day. She must have a carriage; angels of that sort have no wings. We shall find her whether she is on the road or hidden in Paris. There is the semaphore. We can stop her. You shall be happy. But, my dear fellow, you have made a blunder, of which men of your energy are very often guilty. They judge others by themselves, and do not know the point when human nature gives way if you strain the cords too tightly. Why did you not say a word to me sooner? I would have told you to be punctual. Good-by till to-morrow," he added, as Montriveau said nothing. "Sleep if you can," he added, with a grasp of the hand.

But the greatest resources which society has ever placed at the disposal of statesmen, kings, ministers, bankers, or any human power, in fact, were all exhausted in vain. Neither Montriveau nor his friends could find any trace of the Duchess. It was clear that she had entered a convent. Montriveau determined to search, or to institute a search, for her through every convent in the world. He must have her, even at the cost of all the lives in a town. And in justice to this extraordinary man, it must be said that his frenzied passion

awoke to the same ardor daily and lasted through five years. Only in 1829 did the Duc de Navarreins hear by chance that his daughter had travelled to Spain as Lady Julia Hopwood's maid, that she had left her service at Cadiz, and that Lady Julia never discovered that Mlle. Caroline was the illustrious duchess whose sudden disappearance filled the minds of the highest society of Paris.

The feelings of the two lovers when they met again on either side of the grating in the Carmelite convent should now be comprehended to the full, and the violence of the passion awakened in either soul will doubtless explain the catastrophe of the story.

In 1823 the Duc de Langeais was dead, and his wife was free. Antoinette de Navarreins was living, consumed by love, on a ledge of rock in the Mediterranean; but it was in the Pope's power to dissolve Sister Theresa's vows. The happiness bought by so much love might yet bloom for the two lovers. These thoughts sent Montriveau flying from Cadiz to Marseilles, and from Marseilles to Paris.

A few months after his return to France, a merchant brig, fitted out and munitioned for active service, set sail from the port of Marseilles for Spain. The vessel had been chartered by several distinguished men, most of them Frenchmen, who, smitten with a romantic passion for the East, wished to make a journey to those lands. Montriveau's familiar knowledge of Eastern customs made him an invaluable travelling companion, and at the entreaty of the rest he had joined the expedition; the Minister of War appointed him lieutenant-general, and put him on the Artillery Commission to facilitate his departure.

Twenty-four hours later the brig lay-to off the northwest shore of an island within sight of the Spanish coast. She had been specially chosen for her shallow keel and light mastage, so that she might lie at anchor in safety half a league away from the reefs that secure the island from approach in this direction. If fishing vessels or the people

on the island caught sight of the brig, they were scarcely likely to feel suspicious of her at once; and besides, it was easy to give a reason for her presence without delay. Montriveau hoisted the flag of the United States before they came in sight of the island, and the crew of the vessel were all American sailors, who spoke nothing but English. One of M. de Montriveau's companions took the men ashore in the ship's long boat, and made them so drunk at an inn in the little town that they could not talk. Then he gave out that the brig was manned by treasure-seekers, a gang of men whose hobby was well known in the United States; indeed, some Spanish writer had written a history of them. The presence of the brig among the reefs was now sufficiently explained. The owners of the vessel, according to the self-styled boatswain's mate, were looking for the wreck of a galleon which foundered thereabout in 1778 with a cargo of treasure from Mexico. The people at the inn and the authorities asked no more questions.

Armand, and the devoted friends who were helping him in his difficult enterprise, were all from the first of the opinion that there was no hope of rescuing or carrying off Sister Theresa by force or stratagem from the side of the little town. Wherefore these bold spirits, with one accord, determined to take the bull by the horns. They would make a way to the convent at the most seemingly inaccessible point; like General Lamarque, at the storming of Capri, they would conquer Nature. The cliff at the end of the island, a sheer block of granite, afforded even less hold than the rock of Capri. So it seemed at least to Montriveau, who had taken part in that incredible exploit, while the nuns in his eyes were much more redoubtable than Sir Hudson Lowe. To raise a hubbub over carrying off the Duchess would cover them with confusion. They might as well set siege to the town and convent, like pirates, and leave not a single soul to tell of their victory. So for them their expedition wore but two aspects. There should be a conflagration and a feat of arms that should dismay all Europe, while the motives of

the crime remained unknown; or, on the other hand, a mysterious, aerial descent which should persuade the nuns that the Devil himself had paid them a visit. They had decided upon the latter course in the secret council held before they left Paris, and subsequently everything had been done to insure the success of an expedition which promised some real excitement to jaded spirits weary of Paris and its pleasures.

An extremely light pirogue, made at Marseilles on a Malayan model, enabled them to cross the reef, until the rocks rose from out of the water. Then two cables of iron wire were fastened several feet apart between one rock and another. These wire ropes slanted upward and downward in opposite directions, so that baskets of iron wire could travel to and fro along them; and in this manner the rocks were covered with a system of baskets and wire-cables, not unlike the filaments which a certain species of spider weaves about a tree. The Chinese, an essentially imitative people, were the first to take a lesson from the work of instinct. Fragile as these bridges were, they were always ready for use; high waves and the caprices of the sea could not throw them out of working order; the ropes hung just sufficiently slack, so as to present to the breakers that particular curve discovered by Cachin, the immortal creator of the harbor at Cherbourg. Against this cunningly devised line the angry surge is powerless; the law of that curve was a secret wrested from Nature by that faculty of observation in which nearly all human genius consists.

M. de Montriveau's companions were alone on board the vessel, and out of sight of every human eye. No one from the deck of a passing vessel could have discovered either the brig hidden among the reefs, or the men at work among the rocks; they lay below the ordinary range of the most powerful telescope. Eleven days were spent in preparation, before the Thirteen, with all their infernal power, could reach the foot of the cliffs. The body of the rock rose up straight from the sea to a height of thirty fathoms. Any

attempt to climb the sheer wall of granite seemed impossible; a mouse might as well try to creep up the slippery sides of a plain china vase. Still there was a cleft, a straight line of fissure so fortunately placed that large blocks of wood could be wedged firmly into it at a distance of about a foot apart. Into these blocks the daring workers drove iron cramps, specially made for the purpose, with a broad iron bracket at the outer end, through which a hole had been drilled; each bracket carried a light deal board which corresponded with a notch made in a pole that reached to the top of the cliffs, and was firmly planted in the beach at their feet. With ingenuity worthy of these men, who found nothing impossible, one of their number, a skilled mathematician, had calculated the angle from which the steps must start; so that from the middle they rose gradually, like the sticks of a fan, to the top of the cliff, and descended in the same fashion to its base. That miraculously light, yet perfectly firm, staircase cost them twenty-two days of toil. A little tinder and the surf of the sea would destroy all trace of it forever in a single night. A betrayal of the secret was impossible; and all search for the violators of the convent was doomed to failure.

At the top of the rock there was a platform with sheer precipice on all sides. The Thirteen, reconnoitring the ground with their glasses from the masthead, made certain that though the ascent was steep and rough, there would be no difficulty in gaining the convent garden, where the trees were thick enough for a hiding-place. After such great efforts they would not risk the success of their enterprise, and were compelled to wait till the moon passed out of her last quarter.

For two nights Montriveau, wrapped in his cloak, lay out on the rock platform. The singing at vespers and matins filled him with unutterable joy. He stood under the wall to hear the music of the organ, listening intently for one voice among the rest. But in spite of the silence, the confused effect of music was all that reached his ears. In those sweet harmonies defects of execution are lost; the pure spirit

of art comes into direct communication with the spirit of the hearer, making no demand on the attention, no strain on the power of listening. Intolerable memories awoke. All the love within him seemed to break into blossom again at the breath of that music; he tried to find auguries of happiness in the air. During the last night he sat with his eyes fixed upon an ungrated window, for bars were not needed on the side of the precipice. A light shone there all through the hours; and that instinct of the heart, which is sometimes true, and as often false, cried within him, "She is there!"

"She is certainly there! To-morrow she will be mine," he said to himself, and joy blended with the slow tinkling of a bell that began to ring.

Strange unaccountable workings of the heart! The nun, wasted by yearning love, worn out with tears and fasting, prayer and vigils; the woman of nine-and-twenty, who had passed through heavy trials, was loved more passionately than the light-hearted girl, the woman of four-and-twenty, the sylphide, had ever been. But is there not, for men of vigorous character, something attractive in the sublime expression engraven on women's faces by the impetuous stirrings of thought and misfortunes of no ignoble kind? Is there not a beauty of suffering which is the most interesting of all beauty to those men who feel that within them there is an inexhaustible wealth of tenderness and consoling pity for a creature so gracious in weakness, so strong with love? It is the ordinary nature that is attracted by young, smooth, pink-and-white beauty, or, in one word, by prettiness. In some faces love awakens amid the wrinkles carved by sorrow and the ruin made by melancholy; Montriveau could not but feel drawn to these. For cannot a lover, with the voice of a great longing, call forth a wholly new creature? a creature athrob with the life but just begun breaks forth for him alone, from the outward form that is fair for him, and faded for all the world besides. Does he not love two women?—One of them, as others see her, is pale and wan and sad; but

the other, the unseen love that his heart knows, is an angel who understands life through feeling, and is adorned in all her glory only for love's high festivals.

The General left his post before sunrise, but not before he had heard voices singing together, sweet voices full of tenderness sounding faintly from the cell. When he came down to the foot of the cliffs where his friends were waiting, he told them that never in his life had he felt such inthralling bliss, and in the few words there was that unmistakable thrill of repressed strong feeling, that magnificent utterance which all men respect.

That night eleven of his devoted comrades made the ascent in the darkness. Each man carried a poniard, a provision of chocolate, and a set of house-breaking tools. They climbed the outer walls with scaling-ladders, and crossed the cemetery of the convent. Montriveau recognized the long, vaulted gallery through which he went to the parlor, and remembered the windows of the room. His plans were made and adopted in a moment. They would effect an entrance through one of the windows in the Carmelite's half of the parlor, find their way along the corridors, ascertain whether the sister's names were written on the doors, find Sister Theresa's cell, surprise her as she slept, and carry her off, bound and gagged. The programme presented no difficulties to men who combined boldness and a convict's dexterity with the knowledge peculiar to men of the world, especially as they would not scruple to give a stab to insure silence.

In two hours the bars were sawn through. Three men stood on guard outside, and two inside the parlor. The rest, barefooted, took up their posts along the corridor. Young Henri de Marsay, the most dexterous man among them, disguised by way of precaution in a Carmelite's robe, exactly like the costume of the convent, led the way, and Montriveau came immediately behind him. The clock struck three just as the two men reached the dormitory cells. They soon saw the position. Everything was per-

fectly quiet. With the help of a dark lantern they read the names luckily written on every door, together with the picture of a saint or saints and the mystical words which every nun takes as a kind of motto for the beginning of her new life and the revelation of her last thought. Montriveau reached Sister Theresa's door and read the inscription, *Sub invocatione sanctæ matris Theresæ*, and her motto, *Adoremus in æternum.* Suddenly his companion laid a hand on his shoulder. A bright light was streaming through the chinks of the door. M. de Ronquerolles came up at that moment.

"All the nuns are in the church," he said; "they are beginning the Office for the Dead."

"I will stay here," said Montriveau. "Go back into the parlor, and shut the door at the end of the passage."

He threw open the door and rushed in, preceded by his disguised companion, who let down the veil over his face.

There before them lay the dead Duchess; her plank bed had been laid on the floor of the outer room of her cell, between two lighted candles. Neither Montriveau nor de Marsay spoke a word or uttered a cry; but they looked into each other's faces. The General's dumb gesture tried to say, "Let us carry her away!"

"Quick!" shouted Ronquerolles, "the procession of nuns is leaving the church. You will be caught!"

With magical swiftness of movement, prompted by an intense desire, the dead woman was carried into the convent parlor, passed through the window, and lowered from the walls before the Abbess, followed by the nuns, returned to take up Sister Theresa's body. The sister left in charge had imprudently left her post; there were secrets that she longed to know; and so busy was she ransacking the inner room, that she heard nothing, and was horrified when she came back to find that the body was gone. Before the women, in their blank amazement, could think of making a search, the Duchess had been lowered by a cord to the foot of the crags, and Montriveau's companions had de-

stroyed all traces of their work. By nine o'clock that morning there was not a sign to show that either staircase or wire-cables had ever existed, and Sister Theresa's body had been taken on board. The brig came into the port to ship her crew, and sailed that day.

Montriveau, down in the cabin, was left alone with Antoinette de Navarreins. For some hours it seemed as if her dead face was transfigured for him by that unearthly beauty which the calm of death gives to the body before it perishes.

"Look here!" said Ronquerolles when Montriveau reappeared on deck, "*that* was a woman once, now it is nothing. Let us tie a cannon ball to both feet and throw the body overboard; and if ever you think of her again, think of her as of some book that you read as a boy."

"Yes," assented Montriveau, "it is nothing now but a dream."

"That is sensible of you. Now, after this, have passions; but as for love, a man ought to know how to place it wisely; it is only a woman's last love that can satisfy a man's first love."

PRÉ-LÉVEQUE, GENEVA,
January 26, 1834.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CESAR BIROTTEAU

PREFACE

FEW BOOKS of Balzac's have been the subject of more diverse judgment than "César Birotteau." From the opinion of the unnamed solicitor, who told Madame Serville that it was an invaluable work to consult on bankruptcy, to that of M. Paul Lacroix (beloved of many as the Bibliophile Jacob), that it might be forgiven for the sake of "Le Père Goriot" and the "Peau de Chagrin," there is not perhaps quite so great a distance as may appear; but other expressions, opposed not merely in form, but in fact, might probably be collected.

As for the unfavorable division of these opinions there is no difficulty in discovering their causes; and there should be little, save in the case of blind partisans, in acknowledging their partial validity. Although the book opens with one of Balzac's most brilliant pieces of actual human observation—the description of the vague and half-delirious terror of waking from a bad dream—and though the subsequent conversation between César and Constance has the merit of no vulgar curtain-lecture, it soon goes off into one of those endless retrospective narrations which are among the greatest blots on the "Comédie," which utterly stop the action, and which, in the case of very many readers who are not gifted with the faculty of what may be called literary mountaineering, are very likely to cause the putting down of the book. To this initial difficulty has to be added the choking of the latter part with those bankruptcy details which did so charm the professional mind of Laure Balzac's

learned friend, and which, for unprofessional minds, have something which is very much the reverse of charm. The reader of only moderate athletic powers, who has with difficulty struggled through and up the sloughs and slopes of the previous history of the Birotteau business, is hardly to be blamed if he gives up the attempt in despair after some attempt on the slippery "screes" of commercial law which Balzac has delighted to strew over the higher ground.

Complaints of these drawbacks, I repeat, would be, and are, just. Nevertheless, though the list of the faults of the book is not even yet exhausted, it will be a very great pity if any one is baffled by them and fails to go through to the end. For "César Birotteau" is a book than which none of Balzac's is more thoroughly *vécu*, as his countrymen say, more thoroughly inspired with the personal sympathies and experiences of the author; and this with Balzac was always a guarantee of success. He too knew bankruptcy well, and not merely by his studies in the lawyer's office; for though I believe he never actually "passed the court" (even his printing and publishing operations, disastrous as they were, terminated in arrangements), he was face to face with it all his life. He, too, knew the attraction, the fatal attraction of *une bonne affaire*, such as he speaks of in one of his letters—*une bonne affaire qui ne demande que cent mille francs*. He was perfectly capable of buying up all the nuts in Paris in order to make hair-oil of them; I should not be at all surprised if he had actually had in view this very speculation. And he thought he knew the ways of bankers and folk of that kind; though whether he did or not, the sons of Zeruiah were usually as much too hard for him as they were for Birotteau. Hence there is even in the dryest details, even in the most long-winded *reportage* of the book, the throb of personal interest, the pulse and pant of life.

The action and characters also are interesting, if not, on the whole, quite artistically probable. It will be observed that the hero does a little underlie the constant objection

of the Devil's Advocate to Balzac, that almost every one of his good characters is more or less of a fool. Even a keen man of business *may*, of course, be easily outwitted in a game of pure speculation—a proposition which we need not go to France, or examine the long list of "crashes" from the fictitious *terrains de la Madeleine* to the real Panama, in order to establish. And a very keen man of business may be imprudently expensive in a combined fit of personal vanity and affection for his family. But it is a little of a stretch on the credulity of the reader to represent a plodding tradesman like Birotteau, who, as we are expressly told, had an old-fashioned horror of "paper," as not merely incurring large speculative obligations, but as stripping himself of every rap of ready money while exposing himself to an unusual demand for it. The picture of his going a-borrowing and a-sorrowing is drawn with great power and with much vivacity; but here, too, his simplicity is a thought exaggerated. And Constance's affection for, and fidelity to, an unattractive man, whom she saw to be little better than a fool, may be thought improbable in an ideal beauty with a clear head, while some may even say that ideal beauties are almost always extremely stupid. Yet, again, in Césarine, Momus may point to that superficiality and vagueness which usually, if not always, mar Balzac's treatment of an "honest" girl.

Yet these things will not, any more than those formerly mentioned, make any fair or genial judge give up the book to a lower class than that of Balzac's best, if not of his very best. Whatever faults Birotteau may have, his goodness and his probity and, let us add (though it be a little illegitimate), his tragic end, make him one of the author's most sympathetic personages, as are also his wife and daughter. If Popinot is rather the virtuous apprentice of the stage, and Du Tillet the wicked ditto, who is *not* punished, the former at least is attractive; and Pillerault, the good uncle, certainly cannot be accused of foolishness.

All the minor figures come in well for the action whenever Balzac will let them act, and not be talking himself; and even the bankruptcy affair acquires a sort of interest from the rapidity and bustle of its conduct. As for the ball—that famous and elaborate instance of the penalties and disappointments of elaborately engineered and anticipated pleasure—it is excellent. Nor should we close without special commendation for Claparon, a less labored personage than some of the author's, but a very happy sketch of rascality which is not exactly scoundrelism, because, though entirely unscrupulous, it is not in the least malign.

The book was originally published after a fashion not uncommon in France, but, I think, hardly, if at all, known in England, with no publisher's name, and not for sale, but as a bonus jointly given by the "Figaro" and the "Estafette" to their subscribers for 1838. It bore that date, but was actually issued in November, 1837. In this form it had two volumes, three parts (the present two, and a third, "Le Triomphe de César"), and sixteen chapters with headings. Republished by Charpentier in 1839, it lost the chapters, but kept the part-headings, the last being omitted when it became a "Scène de la Vie Parisienne" in the general arrangement of the "Comédie" (1844). G. S.

Note.—I hope it is not improper to bespeak unusual indulgence for the translator in regard to the technicalities of this book. She has, I know, taken the greatest pains with them. But to secure absolute success in such a matter we must have an expert in French bankruptcy law who is also an expert in English bankruptcy law, and perfect in both literatures as well. One might go far before finding such a person.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

RETAIL PERFUMER,
DEPUTY-MAYOR OF THE SECOND ARRONDISSEMENT, PARIS,
CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOR, ETC.

To Monsieur Alphonse de Lamartine, from his admirer,
De Balzac.

I

CÉSAR'S APOGEE

THERE IS but one brief interval of silence during a winter night in the Rue Saint-Honoré; for to the sounds of carriages rolling home from balls and theatres succeeds the rumbling of market-gardeners' carts on their way to the Great Market. During this pause in the great symphony of uproar sent up by the streets of Paris, this cessation of traffic toward one o'clock in the morning, the wife of M. César Birotteau, of the retail perfumery establishment near the Place Vendome, dreamed a frightful dream, and awoke with a start.

She had met her double. She had appeared to herself, clad in rags, laying a meagre, shrivelled hand on her own shop-door handle. She had been at once in her chair at the cash desk and on the threshold; she had heard herself begging; she had heard two selves speaking in fact, the one from the desk, the other from the doorstep. She turned and stretched out her hand for her husband, and found his place cold. At that her terror grew to such a pitch that she could not move her head, her neck seemed

stiffened to stone, the walls of her throat were glued together, her voice failed her; she sat up rigid and motionless, staring before her with wide eyes. Her hair rose with a painful sensation, strange sounds rang in her ears, something clutched at her heart though it beat hard, she was covered with perspiration, and yet shuddering with cold in the alcove behind the two open folding doors.

Fear, with its partially morbific effects, is an emotion which puts so violent a strain upon the human mechanism that the mental faculties are either suddenly stimulated by it to the highest degree of activity, or reduced to the last extremity of disorganization. Physiology has long been puzzled to account for a phenomenon which upsets its theories and stultifies its hypotheses, although it is simply and solely a shock brought about spontaneously, but, like all electrical phenomena, erratic and unaccountable in its manifestations. This explanation will become a commonplace when men of science will recognize the great part played by electricity in human thinking power.

Mme. Birotteau was just then enduring the pangs which bring about a certain mental lucidity consequent on those terrible discharges when the will is contracted or expanded by a mysterious mechanism. So that, during a lapse of time, exceedingly short if measured by the tickings of a clock, but incommensurable by reason of the infinite rapid impressions which it brought, the poor woman had the prodigious power of uttering more thoughts and of calling up more memories than would have arisen in her mind in its normal state in the course of a whole day. Her soliloquy during this vivid and painful experience may be resumed in a few words she uttered, incongruous and nonsensical as they were: "There is no reason whatever why Birotteau should be out of bed.—He ate so much veal; perhaps it disagreed with him.—But if he had been taken ill, he would have waked me up.—These nineteen years that we have slept here together under this roof, he has never got up in the middle of the night without telling me, poor dear!—He has never slept out ex-

cept when he was on guard.—Did he go to bed when I did? Why, yes. Dear me! how stupid I am!"

She glanced over the bed. There lay her husband's nightcap, molded to the almost conical shape of his head.

"Can he be dead?—Can he have made away with himself?—Why should he?" she thought. "Since they made him deputy-mayor two years ago, I haven't known what to make of him.—To get mixed up with public affairs, on the word of an honest woman, isn't it enough to make you feel sorry for a man?—The business is doing well.—He has just given me a shawl.—Perhaps it is doing badly!—Pshaw! I should know of it if it were.—But is there any knowing what is in the bottom of a man's mind? Or a woman's either? There is no harm in that.—Haven't sales amounted to five thousand francs this very day!—And then a deputy-mayor is not likely to kill himself; he knows the law too well for that.—But where can he be?"

She had no power to turn her head; she could not stretch out a hand to the bell-rope, which would have set in motion a general servant, three shopmen, and the errand boy. The nightmare that lasted on into her waking moments was so strong upon her that she forgot her daughter, peacefully sleeping in the next room, beyond the door which opened at the foot of the bed.

"Birotteau!" She received no answer. She fancied that she had called aloud, but, as a matter of fact, she had only spoken in her thoughts.

"Suppose he should have a mistress? But he has not wit enough for that," she thought, "and then he is too fond of me.—Didn't he tell Mme. Roguin that he had never been unfaithful to me, even in thought?—Why, the man is honesty itself!—If any one deserves to go to heaven, he does.—What he finds to say to his confessor, I don't know. He tells him make-believes.—For a Royalist as he is (without any reason to give for it, by the by), he does not make much of a puff of his religion.—Poor dear, he slips out to mass at eight o'clock as if he were running off to amuse himself on

the sly. It is the fear of God that he has before his eyes; he does not trouble himself much about hell. How should he have a mistress? He keeps so close to my apron-strings that I get tired of it. He loves me like the apple of his eye; he would put out his eyes for me.—All these nineteen years he has never spoken a harsh word to myself.—I come before his daughter with him.—Why, Césarine is there . . . (Césarine! Césarine!)—Birotteau never has a thought that he does not tell me.—It was a true word he said when he came to the sign of the *Little Sailor* and told me that it would take time to know him. And he's gone! . . . that is the extraordinary thing!"

She turned her head with an effort, and peered into the darkness. Night filled the room with picturesque effects, the despair of language, the exclusive province of the painter of genre. What words could reproduce the whimsical shapes that the curtains took as the draught swelled them, or the startling zigzag shadows that they cast? The dim night-light flickered over the red cotton folds; the brass rosette of the curtain-rest reflected the crimson gleams from a central boss, bloodshot like a robber's eye; a ghostly gown was kneeling there; the room was filled, in fact, with all the strange, unfamiliar appearances which appal the imagination at a time when it can only see horrors and exaggerate them.

Mme. Birotteau fancied that she saw a bright light in the next room, and a thought of fire flashed across her; but she caught sight of a red bandanna handkerchief, which looked to her like a pool of blood, and in another moment she discovered traces of a struggle in the arrangement of the furniture, and could think of nothing but burglars. She remembered that there was a sum of money in the safe, and a generous fear extinguished the cold ague of nightmare. Thoroughly alarmed, she sprang out on to the floor in her night-dress, to go to the assistance of the husband whom she fancied was engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with assassins.

"Birotteau! Birotteau!" she cried in a voice of anguish.

The retail perfumer was standing in the middle of the adjacent room, apparently engaged in measuring the air with a yard-stick. His dressing-gown (of green cotton, with chocolate-colored spots) covered him so ill that his bare legs were red with the cold, but he did not seem to notice this.

When César turned round with a "Well, what is it, Constance?" he looked as a man absorbed by his schemes is apt to look—so ludicrously foolish that Mme. Birotteau began to laugh.

"Dear me, César, how queer you look!" said she. "What made you leave me alone without saying anything? I nearly died of fright. I did not know what to think. What are you after, open to every wind that blows? You will catch your death of cold. Birotteau! do you hear?"

"Yes, wife; here I am," and the perfumer returned to the bedroom.

"There, come along and warm yourself, and tell me what crotchet you have in your head," returned Mme. Birotteau, raking among the ashes, which she hastily tried to rekindle. "I am frozen. How stupid it was of me to get up in my night-dress! But I really thought you were being murdered."

The merchant set down the bedroom candlestick on the chimney-piece, huddled himself in his dressing-gown, and looked about in an absent fashion for his wife's flannel petticoat.

"Here, pussie, just put this on," said he. "Twenty-two by eighteen—" he added, continuing his soliloquy. "We could have a magnificent drawing-room."

"Look here! Birotteau, you seem to be in a fair way to lose your wits. Are you dreaming?"

"No; I am thinking, wife."

"Then you might wait; your follies will keep till daylight at any rate," cried she, and, fastening her petticoat under her sleeping jacket, she went to open the door of their daughter's room.

"Césarine is fast asleep. She will not hear a word. Come, Birotteau, tell me about it. What is it?"

"We can give the ball."

"Give a ball! *We* give a ball! My dear! on the word of an honest woman, you are dreaming!"

"Dreaming? not a bit of it, darling.

"Listen; you should always do your duty according to your station in life. Now the Government has brought me into prominence, I belong to the Government, and it is incumbent upon us to study its spirit and to forward its aims by developing them. The Duc de Richelieu has just put an end to the occupation of the Allied troops. According to M. de la Billardière, official functionaries who represent the city of Paris ought to regard it as a duty—each in his own sphere of influence—to celebrate the liberation of French soil. Let us establish beyond proof a genuine patriotism which shall put those accursed schemers that call themselves Liberals to the blush, eh? Do you think that I do not love my country? I mean to show the Liberals and my enemies that to love the King is to love France!"

"Then do you think that you have enemies, my poor Birotteau?"

"Why, yes, we have enemies, wife. And half our friends in the quarter are among them. They all say, 'Birotteau has such luck; Birotteau was once a nobody, and look at him now! He is deputy-mayor; everything has prospered with him.' Very well; there is a nice disappointment still in store for them. You shall be the first to hear that I am a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor; the King signed the patent yesterday!"

"Oh! well then, dear, we must give the ball," cried Mme. Birotteau, greatly excited. "But what can you have done so great as to have the Cross?"

Birotteau was embarrassed.

"When M. de la Billardière told me about it yesterday," said he, "I asked myself, just as you did, what claim I had to it. But, after thinking it over, I saw that I deserved it, and ended by approving the action of the Government. To begin with, I am a Royalist, and I was wounded at Saint-

Roch in Vendémiaire; it is something, isn't it, to have borne arms for the good cause in those times? Then some of the merchants think that the way I discharged my duties as arbitrator at the Consular Tribunal had given general satisfaction; and lastly, I am a deputy-mayor, and the King is distributing four Crosses among the municipal authorities in the city of Paris. After they had gone into the claims of the deputy-mayors for a decoration, the Prefect put me down at the top of the list. The King, too, is sure to know my name; thanks to old Ragon, I supply him with the only hair powder he will use; no one else has the recipe for the powder the late Queen used to wear, poor dear august victim! The Mayor backed me up with all his might. What was I to do? If the King gives me the Cross when I don't ask him for it, it looks to me as if I could not decline it without failing in respect. Was it my doing that I was made a deputy-mayor? So as we have the wind in our sails, wife, as your uncle Pillerault says when he is in a joking humor, I have made up my mind that we must live up to our high position. If I am to be somebody, I will have a try at being whatever Providence meant me to be; a sub-prefect, if such is my destiny. And you make a great mistake, wife, when you imagine that a citizen has discharged all the duty he owes his country when he has supplied his customers with scent across the counter for a score of years. If the State demands the co-operation of our intelligence, we are as much bound to give it, as to pay succession duty, or the door and window tax, *et cetera*. Do you want to sit at your desk all your life? You have been there a pretty long time (God be thanked). The ball will be a private fete of our own. No more of the shop; for *you*, that is. I shall burn the signboard *The Queen of Roses*, and the words, CÉSAR BIROTTEAU (LATE RAGON), RETAIL PERFUMER, shall be painted out on the shop-front. I shall simply put up PERFUMERY in big gold letters instead. There will be room on the mezzanine floor for a cash desk and the safe, and a nice little room for you. I shall make the back-shop and the present dining-room and kitchen into

a warehouse. Then I mean to take the first floor next door, and make a way into it through the wall. The staircase must be altered so that we can walk on the level out of one house and into the other. We shall have a fine set of rooms then, furnished up to the nines.

"Yes. I will have your room done up, and contrive a boudoir for you, and Césarine shall have a pretty room. You must engage a young lady for the shop, and she and the assistant and your waiting-maid (yes, madame, you shall have a waiting-maid) shall have rooms on the second floor. The kitchen must be on the third floor. The cook and the errand-boy shall be lodged up there, and we will keep the stock of bottles and flasks and china on the fourth. The workrooms can be in the attics, so when people come in they will not see bottles being filled and stoppered and labelled, nor sachets being made. That sort of thing is all very well for the Rue Saint-Denis, but it won't do in the Rue Saint-Honoré! Bad style. Our shop ought to be as snug as a drawing-room. Just tell me this: are we the only perfumers who have come in for honors? Aren't there vinegar makers and mustard manufacturers who have a command in the National Guard, and are well looked on at the Tuileries? Let us do as they do, and extend the business, at the same time making our way in society."

"One moment, Birotteau. Do you know what I think while I hear you talk? Well, to me, it is just as if a man was starting out on a wild-goose chase. Don't you remember what I told you when there was talk of your being made mayor? A quiet life before all things, I said; you are about as fit for public life as my arm for a windmill sail. Grand doings will be the ruin of you.

"You did not listen to me; and here the ruin has come upon us. If you are going to take part in politics, you must have money; and have we money? What! you mean to burn the signboard that cost six hundred francs, and give up the Queen of Roses and your real glory? Leave ambition to other people. If you put your hand in the fire, you

get singed, don't you? Politics are very hot nowadays. We have a hundred thousand francs good money invested outside the business, the stock, and the factory, have we? If you have a mind to increase it, do now as you did in 1793. The funds are at seventy-two, buy *rentes;* you would have ten thousand livres a year coming in without drawing anything out of the business. Then take advantage of the transfer to marry out Césarine, sell the business, and let us go and live in your part of the world. Why, any time for these fifteen years you have talked of buying the Treasury Farm, that nice little place near Chinon, with streams, and meadows, and woods, and vineyards, and crofts. It would bring you in a thousand crowns a year, and we both of us like the house. It is still to be had for sixty thousand crowns, and my gentleman must meddle and make in politics, must he?

"Just remember what we are—we are perfumers. Sixteen years ago, before you thought of the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion, if any one had come and said to you, 'You will have money enough to buy the Treasury Farm,' wouldn't you have been wild with joy? Very well; and now, when you can buy the property which you wanted so much that you talked of nothing else every time that you opened your mouth, you begin to talk of squandering the money that we have earned by the sweat of our brows, *ours* I may say, for all along I have sat there at the desk like a dog in a kennel. Now, instead of turning five halfpence into six farthings, and six farthings into nothing at all, wouldn't it be better to have a daughter married to a notary in Paris, and a house that you can stay at, and to spend eight months in the year at Chinon?

"Wait till the funds rise. You can give your daughter eight thousand livres a year; we will keep two thousand for ourselves, and the sale of the business will pay for the Treasury Farm. We will take the furniture down into the country, dear, it is quite worth while, and there we can live like princes, while here one must have at least a million to cut a figure."

"That is just what I expected," said César Birotteau. "Oh! you think I am very foolish, no doubt, but I am not so foolish but that I have looked at the thing all round. Attend to what I am going to say. Alexandre Crottat is a son-in-law that would suit us to a T, and he will have Roguin's practice; but do you imagine that he would be satisfied with a hundred thousand francs? (always supposing that we pay down all our ready money when we marry our daughter; and I am of that way of thinking, for I would have nothing but dry bread for the rest of my days to see her as happy as a queen and the wife of a Paris notary, as you say). Very well, but a hundred thousand francs down, or even eight thousand francs of *rentes*, would go no way toward buying Roguin's practice.

"Young Xandrot (as we call him) thinks, like everybody else, that we are a great deal richer than we are. If that father of his, a rich farmer who sticks to his property like a leech, does not sell something like a hundred thousand francs' worth of land, Xandrot will not be a notary, for Roguin's practice is worth four or five hundred thousand francs. If Crottat does not pay half the money down, how will he manage the business? Césarine ought to have a portion of two hundred thousand francs, and we should retire like decent citizens of Paris on fifteen thousand livres a year in the funds; that is what I should like. If I could make you see all this as clear as daylight, you would have nothing left to say for yourself, eh?"

"Oh! if you have the wealth of the Indies—"

"So I have, darling. Yes," he put his arm round his wife's waist, and tapped her gently with his fingers, impelled by the joy that shone from every feature of his face. "I did not want to say a word about this to you till the thing was ripe, but, faith! to-morrow perhaps it will be settled. This is it.

"Roguin has been proposing a business speculation to me, so safe that he and one or two of his clients, and Ragon, and your uncle Pillerault, are going into it. We are to buy

some building land near the Madeleine. Roguin thinks that we can buy it now for a quarter of the price it will fetch in three years' time when the leases will be out, and we shall be free to exploit it. There are six of us; each agrees to take so much; I am finding three hundred thousand francs for the purchase of three-eighths. If any of us are short of money, Roguin will advance it, taking a mortgage on the share of the land as security. Pillerault, old Ragon, and I are going to take half of it among us; but I want to have it registered in my name, so as to keep hold of the handle of the pan and see how the fish are frying. Roguin himself, under the name of M. Charles Claparon, will be joint-owner with me; he will give a guarantee to each of his partners, and I shall do the same with mine. The deeds of purchase will be private deeds until we have all the land in our hands. Roguin will look into it, and see which of the purchases must be completed, for he is not sure that we can dispense with intermediary registration, and yet transfer a separate title to the buyers when we break up the estate into separate lots; but it would take too long to explain it to you.

"When the building land has been paid for, we shall have nothing to do but fold our arms, and in three years' time we shall have a million. Césarine will be twenty years old, we shall have sold the business, and then, God willing, we will go modestly toward greatness."

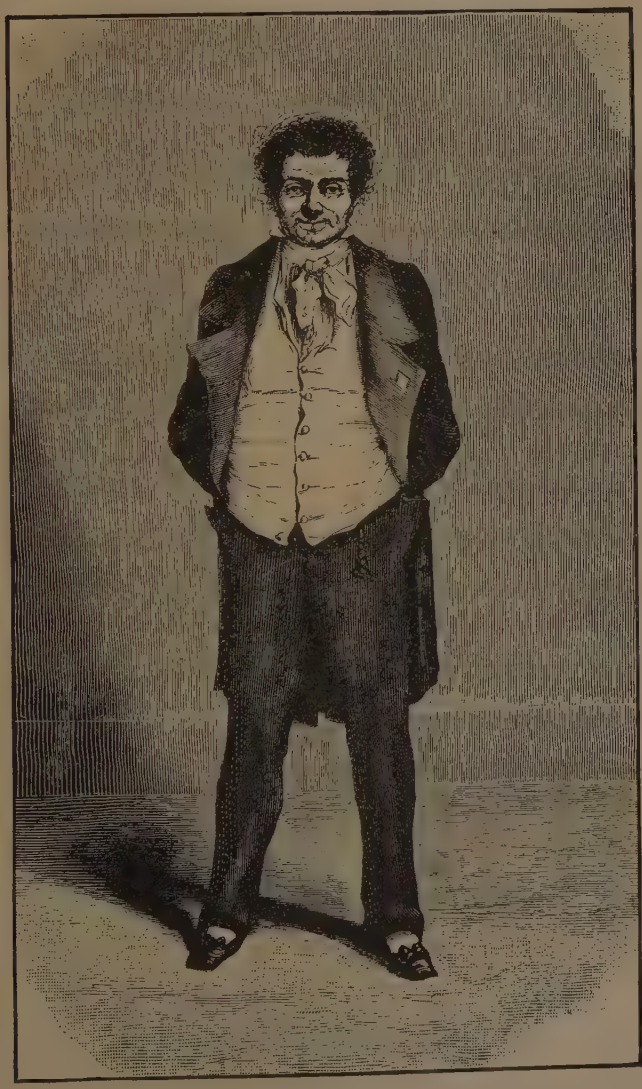
"Well, but where are the three hundred thousand francs to come from?" asked Mme. Birotteau.

"My dear little woman, you know nothing of business. There are the hundred thousand francs in Roguin's hands; I will pay them down. Then I shall borrow forty thousand francs on the buildings and the land that our factory stands on, over in the Faubourg du Temple, and we have twenty thousand francs in bills and acceptances in the portfolio—altogether that makes a hundred and sixty thousand francs. There remain a hundred and forty thousand francs to be raised; I will draw bills to the order of M. Charles Claparon the banker; he will advance the money, less the dis-

count. And there are our three hundred thousand francs: and you don't owe an account until it is due. When the bills fall due, we shall be ready for them, with the profits of the business. If we should find any difficulty in meeting them, Roguin would loan me the money at five per cent on a mortgage on my share of the building land. But there is no need to borrow. I have discovered a specific for making the hair grow, a Comagen oil. Livingston has put up a hydraulic press for me down yonder for the hazel-nuts; all the oil should be squeezed out at once under such strong pressure. In a year's time the probabilities are that I shall have made a hundred thousand francs at least. I am thinking about a placard with *Down with Wigs!* for a heading. It would make a prodigious sensation. *You* don't notice how I lie awake. These three months past Macassar Oil has not let me sleep. I mean to do for Macassar!"

"So these are the fine plans that have been running in your head for a couple of months, and not a word to me about them. And I have just seen myself begging at my own door; what a warning from Heaven! There will be nothing left to us after a while except our eyes to cry with over our troubles. Never shall you do it so long as I am alive; do you hear, César? There is some underhand work somewhere that you do not see; you are so straightforward and honest that you don't suspect others of cheating. What makes them come to offer you millions? You are giving bills; you are going beyond your means; and how if the Oil does not take? Suppose that the money does not come in—suppose that you do not sell the building lots, how are you going to meet the bills? With the hazel-nut shells? You want to rise in the world; you don't intend to have your name over your own shop-door any longer; you mean to take down the sign—*The Queen of Roses*—and yet you are making up rigmaroles of prospectuses and placards, and César Birotteau's name will be posted up at every street corner, and all over the hoardings, wherever there is building going on."

"Oh, no such thing! I shall open a branch business



CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

under the name of Popinot. I shall take a shop somewhere near the Rue des Lombards, and put in young Anselme Popinot to look after it. I shall pay a debt of gratitude which we owe to M. and Mme. Ragon by starting their nephew in a business that may make his fortune. The poor Ragons have looked very seedy for some time past, I have thought."

"There! those people are after your money."

"Why, what people, my charmer? Your own uncle, who loves us like his own life, and comes to dine here every Sunday? Then there is that kind old Ragon, our predecessor, who plays boston with us; old Ragon, with a record of forty years of fair dealing. And lastly, do you mean Roguin, a notary of Paris, a man of fifty, who has been in practice for twenty-five years? A notary of Paris would be the best of the bunch if all honest folk were not equally good. My partners will help me out at a pinch. Where is the plot, darling? —Look here, I must give you a piece of my mind. On my word as an honest man, it weighs upon me.—You have always been as suspicious as a cat! As soon as we had two pennyworth of goods in the shop, you began to think that the customers were thieves.—A man has to go down on his knees and beg and pray of you to allow your fortune to be made. For a daughter of Paris, you have scarcely any ambition! If it were not for your eternal fears, there would not be a happier man than I am.—If I had listened to you, I should never have made the Pâte des Sultanes nor the Carminative Toilet Lotion. We have made a living out of the shop, but it was those two discoveries and our soaps that brought in the hundred and sixty thousand francs which we have over and above the business!—But for my genius, for I have talent as a perfumer, we should be petty shopkeepers, hard put to it to make both ends meet, and I should not be one of the notable merchants who elect the judges at the Tribunal of Commerce; I should neither have been a judge nor a deputy-mayor. Do you know what I should have been? A shopkeeper like old Ragon—no offence to him, for I re-

spect shops; a shop has been the making of us. After selling perfumery for forty years, we should have had three thousand livres a year, as he has; and as prices go now, when things are twice as dear as they used to be, we too should have had hardly enough to live upon. (Day after day, it goes to my heart more and more to think of that old couple. I must come at the truth; I will have it out of Popinot to-morrow.)—Yes, if I had taken advice of you, of you that are afraid of your own luck, and are always asking if you will have to-morrow what you hold to-day, I should have no credit, nor the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and I should not be looked on as a man who knows what he is about. Oh, you may shake your head; if this succeeds, I may be deputy for Paris some day. Aha! I was not named César for nothing; everything has succeeded with me.—This is inconceivable! Everybody out of my own house admits that I have some capacity; but here at home, the one person that I want so much to please, and I toil and moil to make her happy, is just the very one who takes me for a fool."

There was such a depth of real and constant affection in these phrases, divided up by eloquent pauses, and hurled forth like cannon balls (as is the wont of those who take up a recriminating attitude), that Mme. Birotteau in her secret heart felt touched, but, wifelike, she took advantage of the love she inspired to gain her own ends.

"Very well, Birotteau," said she, "if you love me, let me be happy in my own way. Neither you nor I have had any education; we do not know how to talk, nor how to flatter like worldly-wise people, and how can you expect that we should succeed in office under Government? I myself should be quite happy at the Treasury Farm. I have always been fond of animals and birds, and I could spend my time quite well in looking after the poultry, and living like a farmer's wife. Let us sell the business, marry our Césarine, and let your *Imogen* alone. We will pass the winters in Paris in our son-in-law's house, and we shall be happy; nothing in politics nor in business could change our ways. Why should you

try to eclipse other people? Is not our fortune enough for us? When you are a millionnaire, will you be able to eat two dinners a day? Do you want another wife? Look at uncle Pillerault! He is wisely satisfied with what he has, and spends his life in doing good. What does HE want with fine furniture? For I know you have been ordering furniture; I saw Braschon in the shop, and he was not here to buy scent."

"Well, yes, darling, there is some furniture ordered for you. The workmen will begin to-morrow under an architect recommended by M. de la Billardière."

"Good Lord, have mercy upon us!"

"Why, you are unreasonable, pet. Do you think that, fresh and pretty as you are, you can go and bury yourself at thirty-seven at Chinon? I myself, thank the Lord, am only thirty-nine. Chance has opened up a fine career to me, and I am going to enter upon it. If I manage wisely, I can found a house famous among Paris citizens, as people used to do, build up a business, and the Birotteaus shall be like Roguin, Cochin, Guillaume, Le Bas, Nucingen, Saillard, Popinot, and Matifat, all of whom are making, or have made, their mark in their quarter. Come! come! if this speculation were not as safe as gold ingots—"

"Safe!"

"Yes, safe. I have been reckoning it out these two months. Without appearing to do so, I have been making inquiries as to building, at the Hotel de Ville, and of architects and contractors. M. Grindot, the young architect who is to remodel our place, is in despair because he has no capital to invest in our speculation."

"He knows that there will be houses to build; he is urging you on so as to gobble you up."

"Can people like Pillerault, like Charles Claparon, and Roguin be taken in? The gain is as certain as the profits on the Pâte, you see."

"But why should Roguin want to speculate, dear, when he has bought his practice and made his fortune? I see him

go by sometimes; he looks as thoughtful as a minister; he has an underhand look that I do not like; he has secret cares. In five years he has come to look like an old rake. Whose word have you for it that he will not take to his heels as soon as your money is in his hands? Such things have been known. Do we know much about him? It is true that we have been acquainted for fifteen years, but he is not one that I would put my hand into the fire for. I have it! he has ozæna; he does not live with his wife; he has mistresses no doubt, and they are ruining him; there is no other reason for his low spirits that I see. As I dress in the morning, I look through the blinds, and I see him going home on foot. Where does he come from? Nobody knows. It looks to me as if he had another establishment somewhere in town, and he spends one way, and madame another.

"Is that a life for a notary? If they make fifty thousand francs and get through sixty thousand, there will be an end of the money; in twenty years' time they would be as bare as shorn lambs; but if a man is used to shine, he will plunder his friends without mercy. Charity should properly begin at home. That little rascal du Tillet, who used to be with us, is one of his cronies, and I see nothing good in that friendship. If he could not find out du Tillet, he is very blind; and if he knows him, why does he make so much of him? You will say that there is something between Roguin's wife and du Tillet. Very well; I look for no good from a man who has no sense of honor where his wife is concerned. And in any case, aren't the owners of the building lots very stupid to sell the worth of a hundred francs for a hundred sous? If you were to meet a child who did not know what a louis was worth, would you not tell him? Your stroke of business looks to me myself very much like a robbery, no offence to you."

"Dear me! what queer things women are sometimes, and how they mix up their ideas! If Roguin had never meddled in the matter, you would have said, 'Stay, César, stop a bit; you are acting without consulting Roguin, it will come to

no good.' In this present instance he is pledged as it were, and you tell me—"

"No; it is a M. Claparon."

"But a notary's name cannot appear in a speculation."

"Then why should he do something against the law? What do you say to *that*, you who are such a stickler for the law?"

"Just let me go on. Roguin is going into it himself, and you tell me that it will come to no good. Is that sensible? Again you say, 'He is doing something against the law.' But his name will appear in it if necessary. And now you tell me that 'he is rich.' Might not people say as much of me? Ragon and Pillerault might just as well say of me, 'Why are you going into this when you are wallowing in riches?' "

"A tradesman is one thing and a notary another," objected Mme. Birotteau.

"In short, my conscience is quite clear," César went on. "People who sell, sell because they cannot help it; we are no more robbing them than we rob fund-holders when we buy at seventy-five. To-day you buy building lots at to-day's prices; in two years' time it will be different, just as it is with *rentes*. You may be quite sure, Constance-Barbe-Joséphine Pillerault, that you will never catch César Birotteau doing anything that is against the law, nor against his conscience, nor unscrupulous, or not strictly just and fair. That a man who has been in business eighteen years should be suspected in his own family of cheating!"

"Come, César, be pacified! A wife who has known you all that time knows the depths of your soul. You are the master after all. You made the money, didn't you? It is yours; you can spend it. We might be brought to the lowest depths of poverty, but neither your daughter nor I would ever say a single word of reproach. But listen. When you invented the Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion, what risk did you run? Five or six thousand francs perhaps. To-day you are risking all you have on a single

stake, and you are not the only player in this game, and some of the others may turn out sharper than you are.

"You could give this ball and have the rooms redecorated, and spend a thousand francs over it—a useless expense, but not ruinous—but as to the Madeleine affair, I am against it, once and for all. You are a perfumer; be a perfumer, and not a speculator in building land. We women have an instinct that does not lead us astray. I have warned you; now act on your own ideas. You have been a judge at the Tribunal of Commerce, you know the law, you have steered your boat wisely, and I will follow you, César! But I shall have misgivings until I see our fortune on a sound basis and Césarine well married. God send that my dream was not prophetic!"

This meekness was annoying to Birotteau. He had recourse to a simple stratagem, which he found useful on such occasions.

"Listen, Constance; I have not really given my word, though it is as good as if I had."

"Oh! César, there is nothing more to be said, so let us say no more about it. Honor before riches. Come, get into bed, dear; there is no firewood left. Besides, it is easier to talk in bed if it amuses you.—Oh! the bad dream I had! Good Lord, to see *yourself!* Why, it was fearful! . . . Césarine and I will make a pretty number of *neuvaines* for the success of the land."

"Of course, the help of God would do us no harm," Birotteau said gravely, "but the essence of hazel-nuts is a power likewise, wife. I discovered this, like the Pate des Sultanes, by accident; the first time it was by opening a book, but it was an engraving of 'Hero and Leander' that suggested this new idea to me. A woman, you know, pouring oil on her lover's head; isn't it nice? The most certain speculations are those that are based on vanity, self-love, or a regard for appearances. Those sentiments will never be extinct."

"Alas, I see that clearly."

"At a certain age," pursued Birotteau, "men will do anything to grow hair on their heads when they have none. Hairdressers have told me for some time past that they are selling hair-dyes and all sorts of drugs that are said to promote the growth of the hair as well as Macassar Oil. Since the peace, men live more among women, and women do not like bald heads, eh! eh! *mimi!* So the demand for that class of article can be explained by the political situation.

"A composition which would keep your hair in good condition would sell like bread, and all the more so because the essence will doubtless be approved by the Académie des Sciences. Perhaps kind M. Vauquelin will do me another good turn. I shall go to submit my notion to him to-morrow, and ask him to accept that engraving which I have found at last after inquiring for it for two years in Germany. M. Vauquelin is engaged in analyzing hair, precisely the subject, so Chiffreville (who is associated with him in the production of chemicals) tells me. If my discovery concurs with his, my essence will be bought by both sexes. There is a fortune in my idea, I repeat. Good Heavens! I cannot sleep for it. Eh! luckily, little Popinot has the finest head of hair in the world. With a young lady in the shop whose hair should reach to the ground, and who should say (if the thing is possible without sinning against God or your neighbor) that the Comagen Oil (for it is decidedly an oil) counts for something in bringing that about; all the grizzled heads will be down upon it like poverty upon the world. And I say, dearie, how about your ball? I am not spiteful, but I really should like to have that little rogue of a du Tillet, who swaggers about and never sees me on 'Change. He knows that I know something that is not pretty about him. Perhaps I let him off too easily. How funny it is, wife, that one should always be punished for good actions; here below, of course! I have been like a father to him; you do not know all that I have done for him."

"Simply to hear you talk of him makes my flesh creep. If you had known what he intended to do to you, you would

not have kept the theft of three thousand francs so quiet (for I have guessed how the thing was arranged). If you had put him in the police court, perhaps you might have done a good many people a service."

"What did he mean to do to me?"

"Nothing. Birotteau, if you were inclined to listen to me to-night, I would give you a bit of sound advice, and that is to let du Tillet alone."

"Would not people think it very strange if I were to forbid an old assistant my house after I had been his surety for twenty thousand francs when he first started in business for himself? There, let us do good for its own sake. And perhaps du Tillet has mended his ways."

"Everything must be put topsy-turvy here!"

"What is this about topsy-turvy? Why, it will all be ruled like a sheet of music. So you have forgotten already what I have just told you about the staircase, and how I have arranged with Cayron, the umbrella merchant next door, to take part of his house! He and I must go together in the morning to see his landlord, M. Molineux. I have as much business on hand to-morrow as a Minister."

"You have made me dizzy with your plans," said Constance; "I am muddled with them; and besides, Birotteau, I am sleepy."

"Good-morning," returned her husband. "Just listen—I say good-morning, because it is morning now, *mimi!* Ah! she has dropped off to sleep, dear child! There! you shall be the richest of the rich, or my name will not be César any longer," and a few minutes later Constance and César were peacefully snoring.

A rapid glance over the previous history of this household will confirm the impression which should have been conveyed by the friendly dispute between the two principal personages in this "Scène," in which the lives of a retail shopkeeper and his wife are depicted. This sketch will explain, moreover, the strange chances by which César Birotteau be-

came a perfumer, a deputy-mayor, an ex-officer of the National Guard, and a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. By laying bare the depths of his character and the springs of his greatness, it will be possible to comprehend how it is that the vicissitudes of commerce, which strong heads turn to their advantage, become irreparable catastrophes for weaker spirits. Events are never absolute; their consequences depend entirely upon the individual. The misfortune which is a stepping-stone for genius, becomes a piscina for the Christian, a treasure for a quick-witted man, and for weaklings an abyss.

A cotter, Jacques Birotteau by name, living near Chinon, took unto himself a wife, a domestic servant in the house of a lady, who employed him in her vineyard. Three sons were born to them; his wife died at the birth of the third, and the poor fellow did not long survive her. Then the mistress, out of affection for her maid, adopted the oldest of the cotter's boys; she brought him up with her own son, and placed him in a seminary. This François Birotteau took orders, and during the Revolution led the wandering life of priests who would not take the oath, hiding from those who hunted them down like wild beasts, lucky to meet with no worse fate than the guillotine. At the time when this story begins he was a priest of the cathedral at Tours, and had but once left that city to see his brother César. On that occasion the traffic in the streets of Paris so bewildered the good man that he dared not leave his room; he called the cabs "half-coaches," and was astonished at everything. He stayed one week, and then went back to Tours, promising himself that he would never revisit the capital.

The vinedresser's second son, Jean Birotteau, was drawn by the army, and during the early wars of the Revolution promptly became a captain. At the battle of the Trebbia, Macdonald called for volunteers to storm a battery, and Captain Jean Birotteau charged with his company and fell. It appeared to be the destiny of the Birotteaus that other

men should supplant them, or that events should be too strong for them wherever they might be.

The youngest son is the chief actor in this "Scène." When César was fourteen years old, and could read, write, and cipher, he left the district, and with one louis in his pocket set out on foot for Paris to make his fortune. On the recommendation of an apothecary in Tours, M. and Mme. Ragon, retail perfumers, took him as errand boy. César at that time was possessed of a pair of hobnailed shoes, a pair of breeches, blue stockings, a sprigged waistcoat, a countryman's jacket, three ample shirts of good linen, and a stout walking-stick. His hair might be clipped like a chorister's, but he was a solidly-built Tourangeau; and any tendency to the laziness rampant in his district was counteracted in him by a strong desire to make his way in the world. Perhaps he was lacking somewhat in brains as in education, but he had inherited upright instincts and scrupulous integrity from his mother, who had "a heart of gold," as they say in Touraine.

César was paid six francs a month by way of wages. He boarded in the house, and slept on a truckle-bed in the attics next to the servant's room. The shopmen showed him how to fetch and carry and tie up parcels, to sweep out the shop and the pavement before it, and made a butt of him, breaking him in to business after the manner of their kind, and contriving to blend a good deal of amusement (for themselves) with his instruction. M. and Mme. Ragon spoke to him as if he were a dog. Nobody cared how tired the apprentice might be, and he was often very tired and footsore of a night after tramping over the pavements, and his shoulders often ached. The principle "each for himself," that gospel of great cities, put in application, made César's life in Paris a very hard one. He used to cry sometimes when the day was over, and he thought of Touraine, where the peasant works leisurely, and the mason takes his time about laying a stone, and toil is judiciously tempered by idleness; but he usually fell asleep before he reached the

point of thinking of running away, for his morning's round of work awaited him, and he did his duty with the instinctive obedience of a yard dog. If he happened to complain, the first shopman would smile jocosely. "Ah, my boy," said he, "life is not all roses at the Queen of Roses, and larks don't drop ready roasted into your mouth; first catch your lark, and then you want the other things before you cook it."

The cook, a stout Picarde, kept the best morsels for herself, and never spoke to César but to complain of M. and Mme. Ragon, who left her nothing to purloin. On one Sunday at the end of every month she was obliged to stop in the house, and then she broke ground with César. Ursule, scoured for Sunday, was a charming creature in the eyes of the poor errand boy, who, but for a chance, was about to make shipwreck on the first sunken reef in his career. Like all human beings who have no one to care for them, he fell in love with the first woman who gave him a kind glance. The cook took César under her wing, and secret love passages followed, at which the assistants jeered unmercifully. Luckily, two years later, the cook threw over César for a young runaway from the army, a fellow-countryman of hers who was hiding in Paris; and the Picard, a landowner to the extent of several acres, allowed himself to be drawn into a marriage with Ursule.

But during those two years the cook fed her lad César well, and explained to him the seamy side of not a few of the mysteries of Paris. Motives of jealousy led her to instil into him a perfect horror of low haunts, whose perils seemingly were not unknown to her. In 1792 César, the basely deserted, had grown accustomed to his life; his feet were used to the pavements, his shoulders accommodated to packing-cases, his wits to what he called the *humbug* of Paris. So, when Ursule threw him over, he promptly took comfort, for she had not realized any of his intuitive ideas as to sentiments. Lascivious, bad-tempered, fawning, and rapacious, a selfish woman, given to drink, she had jarred

on Birotteau's unsophisticated nature, and had opened out no fair future to him. At times the poor boy saw with dismay that he was bound by the strongest of ties for a simple heart to a creature with whom he had no sympathy. By the time that he was set free he had developed, and had reached the age of sixteen. His wits had been sharpened by Ursule and by the shopmen's jokes; he set himself to learn the business. Intelligence was hidden beneath his simplicity. He watched the customers with shrewd eyes. In his spare moments he asked for explanations concerning the goods; he remembered where everything was kept; one fine day he knew the goods, prices, and quantities in stock better than the newer comers, and thenceforward M. and Mme. Ragon looked on him as a settled institution.

When the Requisition of the terrible year II. made a clean sweep of Citizen Ragon's house, César Birotteau, promoted to be second assistant, improved his position, received a salary of fifty livres per month, and seated himself at the Ragons' table with joy unspeakable. The second assistant at the sign of the Queen of Roses had by this time saved six hundred francs, and he now had a room filled with furniture such as he had for a long time coveted, in which he could keep the belongings which he had accumulated under lock and key. On Décadis, dressed after the fashion of an epoch which affected rough and homely ways, the quiet, humble peasant lad looked at least the equal of other young citizens, and in this way he overleaped the social barriers which in domestic life would, in different times, have been raised between the peasant and the trading classes. Toward the end of that year his honesty won for him the control of the till. The awe-inspiring Citoyenne Ragon saw to his linen, and husband and wife treated him like one of the family.

In Vendémiaire 1794 César Birotteau, being possessed of one hundred gold louis, exchanged them for six thousand francs in assignats, bought *rentes* therewith at thirty francs, paid for them when depreciated prices ruled on the Ex-

change, and hoarded his stock-receipt with unspeakable delight. From that day forward he followed the rise and fall of the funds and the course of events with a secret anxiety that made his heart beat fast at the tidings of every victory or defeat which marked the history of that period.

At this critical period M. Ragon, sometime purveyor of perfumes to Her Majesty Queen Marie-Antoinette, confided to César Birotteau his attachment to the fallen tyrants. This confidence was an event of capital importance in César's life. The Tourangeau was transformed into a fanatical adherent of Royalty in the course of evening conversations after the shutters were put up, the books posted, and the streets quiet without. César was simply obeying his natural instincts. His imagination kindled at the tale of the virtuous deeds of Louis XVI., followed by anecdotes told by husband and wife of the good qualities of the Queen whom they extolled. His tender heart was revolted by the horrible fate of the two crowned heads, struck off but a few paces from the shop door, and he conceived a hatred for a system of government which poured forth innocent blood that cost nothing to shed.

Commercial instincts made him quick to see the death of trade in the law of maximum prices, and in political storms, which always bode ill to business. In his quality of perfumer, moreover, he loathed a Revolution that forbade powder, and was responsible for the fashion of wearing the hair *à la Titus*. The tranquillity secured to the nation by an absolute monarchy seemed to be the one possible condition in which life and property would be safe, so he waxed zealous for a monarchy.

M. Ragon, finding so apt a disciple, made him his assistant in the shop, and initiated him into the secrets of the Queen of Roses. Some of the customers were the most active and devoted of the secret agents of the Bourbons, and kept up a correspondence between Paris and the West. Carried away by youthful enthusiasm, electrified by contact with such men as Georges, La Billardière, Montauran, Bau-

van, Longuy, Manda, Bernier, du Guénic, and Fontaine, César flung himself into the conspiracy of the 13th Vendémiaire, when Royalists and Terrorists combined against the dying Convention.

César had the honor of warring against Napoleon on the steps of the Church of Saint-Roch, and was wounded at the beginning of the action. Every one knows the result of this attempt. The obscurity from which Barras's aide-de-camp then emerged was Birotteau's salvation. A few friends carried the bellicose counter-hand home to the Queen of Roses, where he lay in hiding in the garret, nursed by Mme. Ragon, and lucky to be forgotten. César's military courage had been nothing but a flash. During his month of convalescence he came to some sound conclusions as to the ludicrous alliance of politics and perfumery. If a Royalist he remained, he made up his mind that he would be simply and solely a Royalist perfumer, that he would never compromise himself again, and he threw himself body and soul into his calling.

After the 18th Brumaire, M. and Mme. Ragon, despairing of the Royalist cause, determined to retire from the perfumery trade, to live like respectable private citizens, and to cease to meddle in politics. If they were to receive the full value of their business, it behooved them to find a man who had more honesty than ambition, and more homely sense than brilliancy, so Ragon broached the matter to his first assistant. Birotteau hesitated. He was twenty years old, with a thousand francs a year invested in the public funds; it was his ambition to go to live near Chinon as soon as he should have fifteen hundred francs a year, and the First Consul, after consolidating his position at the Tuileries, should have consolidated the national debt. He asked himself why he should risk his little honestly-earned independence in business. He had never expected to make so much wealth; it was entirely owing to chances which are only embraced in youth; and now he was thinking of taking a wife in Touraine, a woman who should have an equal

fortune, so that he might buy and cultivate a little property called the Treasury Farm, a bit of land on which he had set longing eyes since he had come to man's estate. He dreamed of adding more land to the Treasury Farm, of making a thousand crowns a year, of leading a happy and obscure life there. He was on the point of refusing the perfumer's offer, when love suddenly altered his resolutions and multiplied the total of his ambitions by ten.

Since Ursule's base desertion, César had led a steady life; this was partly a consequence of hard work, partly a dread of the risks run in pursuit of pleasure in Paris. Desire that remains unsatisfied becomes a craving, and marriage for the lower middle classes becomes a fixed idea, for it is the one way open to them of winning and appropriating a woman. César Birotteau was in this case. The first assistant was the responsible person at the Queen of Roses; he had not a moment to spare for amusement. In such a life the craving is still more imperatively felt; so it happened that the apparition of a handsome girl, to whom a dissipated young fellow would scarcely have given a thought, was bound to make the greatest impression upon the steady César.

One fine June day, as he was about to cross the Pont Marie to the Ile Saint-Louis, he saw a girl standing in the doorway of a corner shop on the Quai d'Anjou. Constance Pillerault was a forewoman in a linen-drapery establishment, at the sign of the *Little Sailor*, a pioneer instance of a kind of shop which has since spread all over Paris, with painted signboards more or less in evidence, flying flags, much display. Shawls are suspended in the windows, and piles of cravats erected like card castles, together with countless devices to attract custom, ribbon streamers, showcards, notices of fixed prices; optical illusions and effects carried to the pitch of perfection which has made of shop windows the fairyland of commerce.

The low prices asked at the sign of the Little Sailor for the goods described as "novelties" had brought this shop,

in one of the quietest and least fashionable quarters of Paris, an unheard-of influx of custom.

The aforesaid young lady behind the counter was as celebrated for her beauty as La belle Limonadière of the Café des Milles Colonnes at a later day, and not a few others whose unfortunate lot it has been to attract faces young and old, more numerous than the paving stones of Paris, to the windows of milliners' shops and cafés. The first assistant from the Queen of Roses, whose life was spent between Saint-Roch and the Rue de la Sourdière, in the daily routine of the perfumery business, did not so much as suspect the existence of the Little Sailor, for retailers in Paris know very little of each other.

César was so violently smitten with the beautiful Constance that he hurried tempestuously into the Little Sailor to bargain for half-a-dozen linen shirts. Long did he haggle over the price, bale after bale of linen was displayed for his inspection; he behaved exactly like an Englishwoman in a humor for shopping. The young lady condescended to interest herself in César's purchase; perceiving, by certain signs which women understand, that he had come to the shop more for the sake of the saleswoman than for her goods. He gave his name and address to the young lady, who became quite indifferent to the customer's admiration as soon as he had made his purchase. The poor assistant had done but little to gain Ursule's good graces; if he had been sheepish then, love now made him more sheepish still; he did not dare to say a syllable, and was, moreover, too much dazzled to note the indifference which succeeded to the smiles of this siren of commerce.

Every evening for a week he took up his post before the Little Sailor, hanging about for a glance as a dog waits for a bone at a kitchen door; regardless of the gibes in which the shopmen and saleswomen indulged at his expense; making way meekly for customers or passers-by, watchful of every little change that took place in the shop. A few days later, he again entered the paradise where his angel dwelt, not so

much to purchase pocket-handkerchiefs of her as with a view of communicating a luminous idea to the angel's mind.

"If you should require any perfumery, mademoiselle," he remarked, as he paid the bill, "I could supply you in the same way."

Constance Pillerault daily received brilliant proposals, in which there was never any mention of marriage; and though her heart was as pure as her white forehead, it was not until the indefatigable César had proved his love by six months of strategical operations that she deigned to receive his attentions. Even then she would not commit herself. Prudence had been demanded of her by the multitudinous number of her admirers—wholesale wine merchants, well-to-do barkeepers, and others, who made eyes at her. The lover found a supporter in her guardian, M. Claude-Joseph Pillerault, an ironmonger on the Quai de la Ferraille, a discovery made by the secret espionage which is pre-eminently a lover's shift.

In this rapid sketch, it is impossible to describe the delights of this harmless Parisian love-intrigue; the little extravagances characteristic of the shopman—the first melons of the season, the little dinners at Vénua's, followed by the theatre, the drives into the country in a cab on Sunday—must be passed over in silence. César was not a positively handsome young fellow, but there was nothing in his appearance to repel love. Life in Paris and days spent in a dark shop had toned down the high color natural to the peasant lad. His thick black hair, his Norman breadth of shoulder, his sturdy limbs, his simple straightforward look, all contributed to prepossess people in his favor. Uncle Pillerault, the responsible guardian of his brother's child, made various inquiries about the Tourangeau, and gave his consent; and in the fair month of May, 1800, Mlle. Pillerault promised to marry César Birotteau. He nearly fainted with joy when Constance-Barbe-Joséphine accepted him as her husband under a lime-tree at Sceaux.

"You will have a good husband, my little girl," said

M. Pillerault. "He has a warm heart and sentiments of honor. He is as straight as a line, and as good as the Child Jesus; he is a king of men, in short."

Constance put away once and for all the dreams of a brilliant future, which, like most shopgirls, she had sometimes indulged. She meant to be a faithful wife and a good mother, and took up this life in accordance with the religious programme of the middle classes. After all, this part suited her ideas much better than the dangerous vanities tempting to a youthful Parisian imagination. Constance's intelligence was a narrow one; she was the typical small tradesman's wife, who always grumbles a little over her work, who refuses a thing at the outset, and is vexed when she is taken at her word; whose restless activity takes all things, from cash-box to kitchen, as its province, and supervises everything, from the weightiest business transactions down to almost invisible darns in the household linen. Such a woman scolds while she loves, and can only conceive ideas of the very simplest; only the small change, as it were, of thought passes current with her; she argues about everything, lives in chronic fear of the unknown, makes constant forecasts, and is always thinking of the future. Her statuesque yet girlish beauty, her engaging looks, her freshness, prevented César from thinking of her shortcomings; and, moreover, she made up for them by a woman's sensitive conscientiousness, an excessive thrift, by her fanatical love of work, and genius as a saleswoman.

Constance was just eighteen years old, and the possessor of eleven thousand francs. César, in whom love had developed the most unbounded ambition, bought the perfumery business, and transplanted the Queen of Roses to a handsome shop near the Place Vendome. He was only twenty-one years of age, married to a beautiful and adored wife, and almost the owner of his establishment, for he had paid three-fourths of the amount. He saw (how should he have seen otherwise?) the future in fair colors, which seemed fairer still as he measured his career from its starting-point.

Roguin (Ragon's notary) drew up the marriage-contract, and gave sage counsels to the young perfumer; he it was who interfered when the latter was about to complete the purchase of the business with his wife's money. "Just keep the money by you, my boy; ready money is sometimes a handy thing in a business," he had said.

Birotteau gazed at the notary in admiration, fell into the habit of consulting him, and made a friend of Roguin. Like Ragon and Pillerault, he had so much faith in notaries as a class, that he placed himself in Roguin's hands without admitting a doubt of him. Thanks to this advice, César started business with the eleven thousand francs brought him by Constance; and would not have "changed places" with the First Consul, however brilliant Napoleon's lot might seem to be.

At first the Birotteau establishment had but one servant-maid. They lodged on the mezzanine floor above the shop. In this sort of den, passably furnished by an upholsterer, the newly-wedded pair entered upon a perennial honeymoon. Mme. César at her cash desk was a marvel to see. Her famous beauty exercised an enormous influence on the sales; the dandies of the Empire talked of nothing but the lovely Mme. Birotteau. If César's political principles were tainted with Royalism, it was acknowledged that his business principles were above suspicion; and if some of his fellow-tradesmen envied him his luck, he was believed to deserve it. That shot on the steps of the Church of Saint-Roch had gained him a certain reputation—he was looked upon as a brave man, and a man deep in political secrets; though he had nothing of a soldier's courage in his composition, and not even a rudimentary political notion in his head.

On these data the good folk of the Arrondissement made him a Captain of the National Guard, but he was cashiered by Napoleon (according to Birotteau, that matter of Vendémiaire still rankled in the First Consul's mind), and thenceforward César was invested with a certain halo of martyrdom cheaply acquired, which made him interesting to opponents, and gave him a certain importance.

Here, in brief, is the history of this household, so happy in itself, and disturbed by none but business cares.

During the first year, César instructed his wife in all the ins and outs of the perfumery business, which she was admirably quick to grasp; she might have been brought into the world for that sole purpose, so well did she adapt herself to her customers. The result of the stocktaking at the end of the year alarmed the ambitious perfumer. After deducting all expenses, he might perhaps hope, in twenty years' time, to make the modest sum of a hundred thousand francs, the price of his felicity. He determined then and there to find some speedier road to fortune, and, by way of a beginning, to be a manufacturer as well as a retailer.

Acting against his wife's counsel, he took the lease of a shed on some building land in the Faubourg du Temple, and painted up thereon, in huge letters, CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S FACTORY. He enticed a workman from Grasse, and with him began to manufacture several kinds of soap, essences, and eau-de-cologne, on the system of half profits. The partnership only lasted six months, and ended in a loss, which he had to sustain alone; but Birotteau did not lose heart. He meant to obtain a result at any price, if it were only to escape a scolding from his wife. He confessed to her afterward that, in those days of despair, his head used to boil like a pot on the fire, and that many a time, but for his religious principles, he would have thrown himself into the Seine.

One day, depressed by several unsuccessful experiments, he was sauntering home to dinner along the boulevards (the lounger in Paris is a man in despair quite as often as a genuine idler), when a book among a hamperful at six sous apiece caught his attention; his eyes were attracted by the yellow dusty title-page, "Abdeker," so it ran, "or the Art of Preserving Beauty."

Birotteau took up the work. It claimed to be a translation from the Arabic, but in reality it was a sort of romance written by a physician in the previous century. César happened to stumble upon a passage therein which treated of

perfumes, and with his back against a tree in the boulevard, he turned the pages over till he reached a footnote, wherein the learned author discoursed of the nature of the dermis and epidermis. The writer showed conclusively that such and such an unguent or soap often produced an effect exactly opposite to that intended, and the ointment, or the soap, acted as a tonic upon a skin that required a lenitive treatment, or *vice versâ*.

Birotteau saw a fortune in the book, and bought it. Yet, feeling little confidence in his unaided lights, he went to Vauquelin, the celebrated chemist, and in all simplicity asked him how to compose a double cosmetic which should produce the required effect upon the human epidermis in either case. The really learned—men so truly great in this sense that they can never receive in their lifetime all the fame that should reward vast labors like theirs—are almost always helpful and kindly to the poor in intellect. So it was with Vauquelin. He came to the assistance of the perfumer, gave him a formula for a paste to whiten the hands, and allowed him to style himself its inventor. It was this cosmetic that Birotteau called the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes. The more thoroughly to accomplish his purpose, he used the recipe for the paste for a wash for the complexion, which he called the Carminative Toilet Lotion.

He took a hint from the Little Sailor, and was the first among perfumers to make the lavish use of placards, handbills, and diverse kinds of advertisement, which, perhaps not undeservedly, are called quackery. The Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion were introduced to the polite world and to commerce by gorgeous placards, with the words *Approved by the Institute* at the head. The effect of this formula, employed thus for the first time, was magical. Not France only, but the face of Europe was covered with flaming proclamations, yellow, scarlet, and blue, which informed the world that the sovereign lord of the Queen of Roses manufactured, kept in stock, and supplied everything in his line of business at moderate charges.

At a time when the East was the one topic of conversation, in a country where every man has a natural turn for the part of a sultan, and every woman is no less minded to become a sultana, the idea of giving to any cosmetic such a name as the Pate des Sultanes might have occurred to any ordinary man, it needed no cleverness to foresee its fascination; but the public always judges by results, and Birotteau's reputation for business ability but grew the more when he indited a prospectus, and the very absurdity of its language contributed to its success. In France we only laugh at men and things who are talked about, and those who fail to make any mark are not talked about. So although Birotteau's stupidity was real and not feigned, people gave him credit for playing the fool on purpose.

A copy of the prospectus has been procured, not without difficulty, by the house of Popinot & Co., druggists in the Rue des Lombards. In a more elevated connection this curious piece of rhetoric would be styled a historical document, and valued for the light that it sheds on contemporary manners. Here, therefore, it is given:

CÉSAR BIROTTEAU'S

SUPERFINE PÂTE DES SULTANES

AND

CARMINATIVE TOILET LOTION.

A MARVELLOUS DISCOVERY!

Approved by the Institute

"For some time past a preparation for the hands, and a toilet lotion more efficacious than Eau-de-Cologne, have been generally desired by both sexes throughout Europe. After devoting long nights to the study of the dermis and epidermis of both sexes—for both attach, and with reason, the greatest importance to the softness, suppleness, bloom, and delicate surface of the skin—M. Birotteau, a perfumer of high standing, and well known in the capital and abroad, has invented two preparations, which from their first appearance have been deservedly called 'marvellous' by people of the highest fashion in Paris. Both preparations possess astonishing properties, and act upon the skin without bringing about premature wrinkles, the inevitable result of the rash use of the drugs hitherto compounded by ignorance and cupidity.

"These inventions are based upon the difference of temperaments, which are divided into two great classes, and are indicated by the difference of color in the pâte and the lotion; the rose-colored preparations being intended for the dermis and epidermis of persons of lymphatic constitution, and the white for those endowed with a sanguine temperament.

"The pâte is called the Pâte des Sultanes, because the specific was in the first instance invented for the Seraglio by an Arab physician. It has been approved by the Institute on the report of our illustrious chemist Vauquelin, and the lotion, likewise approved, is compounded upon the same principles.

"The Pâte des Sultanes, an invaluable preparation, which exhales the sweetest fragrance, dissipates the most obstinate freckles, whitens the skin in the most stubborn cases, and represses the perspiration of the hand from which women suffer no less than men.

"The Carminative Toilet Lotion removes the slight pimples which sometimes appear inopportunely on ladies' faces, and contravene their projects for the ball; it refreshes and revives the color by opening or closing the pores of the skin in accordance with the exigencies of the temperament, while its efficacy in arresting the ravages of time is so well known already that many ladies, out of gratitude, call it the Friend of Beauty.

"Eau-de-Cologne is purely and simply an ordinary perfume without special efficacy, while the Superfine Pâte des Sultanes and the Carminative Toilet Lotion are two active remedies, powerful agents, perfectly harmless in their operation of seconding the efforts of nature; their perfumes, essentially balsamic and exhilarating, admirably refresh the animal spirits, and charm and revive ideas. Their merits are as marvellous as their simplicity; in short, to woman they offer an added charm, while a means of attraction is put within the reach of man.

"The daily use of the Carminative Toilet Lotion allays the smarting sensation caused by shaving, while it keeps the lips red and smooth, and prevents chapping; it gradually dissipates freckles by natural means; and, finally, it restores tone to the complexion. These results are the signs of that perfect equilibrium of the humors of the body, which insures immunity from the migraine to those who are subject to that distressing complaint. In short, the Carminative Toilet Lotion, which may be used in all the operations of the toilet, is a preventive of cutaneous affections, by permitting free transpiration through the tissues, while imparting a permanent bloom to the skin.

"All communications should be prepaid, and addressed to M. César Birotteau (late Ragon), Perfumer to her late Majesty, Queen Marie-Antoinette, at the Queen of Roses, Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, Paris.

"*The price of the Pâte is three livres per tablet, and of the Toilet Lotion, six livres per bottle.*

"To prevent fraudulent imitations, M. Birotteau warns the public that the wrapper of every tablet bears his signature, and that his name is stamped on every bottle of the Toilet Lotion."

The success of this scheme was due, as a matter of fact (though César did not suspect it), to Constance, who proposed that they should send sample cases of the Carminative Toilet Lotion and the Superfine Pate des Sultanes to every perfumer in France or abroad, offering, at the same time, a discount of thirty per cent as an inducement to take a gross of either article at a time.

The Pate and the Lotion were really better than similar cosmetics, and the simple were attracted by that distinction made between the two temperaments. The discount was tempting to hundreds of perfumers all over France, and each would take annually three hundred gross or more of both preparations; and if the profits on each article were small, the demand was great, and the output enormous. César was able to buy the sheds and the plot of land in the Faubourg du Temple. He built a large factory there, and had the Queen of Roses magnificently decorated. The household began to feel the small comforts of an easier existence, and the wife quaked less than heretofore.

In 1810 Mme. César predicted a rise in house rents. At her instance her husband took the lease of the whole house above the shop, and they removed from the mezzanine floor (where they had begun housekeeping together) to the first floor. A piece of luck which befell them about that time decided Constance to shut her eyes to Birotteau's follies in the matter of decorating a room for her. The perfumer was made a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce. It was his character for integrity and conscientiousness, together with the esteem in which he was held, that gained this dignity for him; thenceforward he must be considered as a notable among the tradesmen of Paris.

He used to rise at five o'clock in the morning to read handbooks on jurisprudence and works which treated of commercial law. With his instinct for fair dealing, his uprightness, his readiness to take trouble—all qualities essential for the appreciation of the knotty points submitted to arbitration—he was one of the most highly esteemed

judges in the Tribunal. His faults contributed no less to his reputation. César was so conscious of his inferiority that he was ready and willing to take his colleagues' opinion, and they were flattered by the attention with which he listened to them. Some of them thought a good deal of the silent approbation of such a listener, reputed to be a hard-headed man; others were delighted with his amiability and modesty, and extolled him on those grounds. Those amenable to his jurisdiction lauded his benevolence and conciliatory spirit, and he was often called in to act as arbitrator in disputes wherein his homely sense suggested to him a kind of Cadi's justice.

He managed to invent and use throughout his term of office a style of his own; it was stuffed with platitudes, interspersed with trite sayings, and pieces of reasoning rounded into phrases which came out without effort, and sounded like eloquence in the ears of shallow people. In this way he commended himself to the naturally mediocre majority, condemned to penal servitude for life and to views of the earth earthy.

César lost so much time at the Tribunal that his wife put pressure upon him, and thenceforward he declined the costly honor.

In the year 1813 this household, thanks to its constant unity, after plodding along through life in a humdrum fashion, entered upon an era of prosperity which nothing seemingly ought to check.

M. and Mme. Ragon (their predecessors), Uncle Pillerault, Roguin the notary, the Matifats (druggists in the Rue des Lombards who supplied the Queen of Roses), Joseph Lebas (a retail draper, a leading light in the Rue Saint-Denis, successor to Guillaume at the Cat and Racket), Judge Popinot (Mme. Ragon's brother), Chiffreville (of the firm of Protez & Chiffreville), M. Cochin (a clerk of the Treasury, and a sleeping partner in Matifat's business), his wife, Mme. Cochin, and the Abbé Loraux (confessor and director of the devout among this little circle) made up, with one or two

others, the number of their acquaintance. César Birotteau might be a Royalist, but public opinion at that time was in his favor; and though he had scarcely a hundred thousand francs besides his business, was looked upon as a very wealthy man. His steady-going ways, his punctuality, his habit of paying ready money for everything, of never discounting bills, while he would take paper to oblige a customer of whom he was sure—all these things, together with his readiness to oblige, had brought him a great reputation. And not only so; he had really made a good deal of money, but the building of his factories had absorbed most of it, and he paid nearly twenty thousand francs a year in rent. The education of their only daughter, whom Constance and César both idolized, had been a heavy expense. Neither the husband nor the wife thought of money where Césarine's pleasure was concerned, and they had never brought themselves to part with her.

Imagine the delight of the poor peasant-parvenu when he heard his charming Césarine play a sonata by Steibelt or sing a ballad; when he saw her writing French correctly, or making sepia drawings of landscape, or listened while she read aloud from the Racines, father and son, and explained the beauties of the poetry. What happiness it was for him to live again in this fair, innocent flower, not yet plucked from the parent stem; this angel, over whose growing graces and earliest development they had watched with such passionate tenderness; this only child, incapable of despising her father or of laughing at his want of education, so much was she his little daughter.

When César came to Paris, he had known how to read, write, and cipher, and at that point his education had been arrested. There had been no opportunity in his hard-working life of acquiring new ideas and information beyond the perfumery trade. He had spent his time among folk to whom science and literature were matters of indifference, and whose knowledge was of a limited and special kind; he himself, having no time to spare for loftier studies, became perforce a

practical man. He adopted (how should he have done otherwise?) the language, errors, and opinions of the Parisian tradesman who admires Molière, Voltaire, and Rousseau on hearsay, and buys their works, but never opens them; who will have it that the proper way to pronounce *armoire* is *ormoire: or* means gold, and *moire* means silk, and women's dresses used almost always to be made of silk, and in their cupboards they locked up silk and gold—therefore, *ormoire* is right and *armoire* is an innovation. Potier, Talma, Mlle. Mars, and other actors and actresss were millionnaires ten times over, and did not live like ordinary mortals: the great tragedian lived on raw meat, and Mlle. Mars would have a fricassee of pearls now and then—an idea she had taken from some celebrated Egyptian actress. As to the Emperor, his waistcoat pockets were lined with leather, so that he could take a handful of snuff at a time; he used to ride at full gallop up the staircase of the orangery at Versailles. Authors and artists ended in the workhouse, the natural close to their eccentric careers; they were, every one of them, atheists into the bargain, so that you had to be very careful not to admit anybody of that sort into your house. Joseph Lebas used to advert with horror to the story of his sister-in-law Augustine, who married the artist Sommervieux. Astronomers lived on spiders. These bright examples of the attitude of the bourgeois mind toward philology, the drama, politics, and science will throw light upon its breadth of view and powers of comprehension.

Let a poet pass along the Rue des Lombards, and some stray sweet scent shall set him dreaming of the East; for him, with the odor of the Khuskus grass, would come a vision of Nautch girls in an Eastern bath. The brilliant red lac would call up thoughts of Vedic hymns, of alien creeds and castes; and at a chance contact with an ivory tusk, he would mount an elephant and make love, like the king of Lahore, in a muslin-curtained howdah.

But the petty tradesman does not so much as know whence the raw materials of his business are brought. Of natural

history or of chemistry, Birotteau the perfumer, for instance, knew nothing whatever. It is true that he regarded Vauquelin as a great man, but Vauquelin was an exception. César himself was about on a par with the retired grocer, who summed up a discussion on the ways of growing tea by announcing with a knowing air that "there are only two ways of obtaining tea—from Havre or by the overland route." And Birotteau thought that aloes and opium were only to be found in the Rue des Lombards. People told you that attar of roses came from Constantinople, but, like eau-de-cologne, it was made in Paris. These names of foreign places were humbug; they had been invented to amuse the French nation, who cannot abide anything that is made in France. A French merchant has to call his discovery an English invention, or people will not buy it; it is just the same in England, the druggists there tell you that things come from France.

Yet César was not altogether a fool or a dunce: an honest and kind heart shed a lustre over everything that he did and made his a worthy life, and a kindly deed absolves all possible forms of ignorance. His unvarying success gave him assurance; and, in Paris, assurance, the sign of power, is taken for power itself.

César's wife, who had learned to know her husband's character during the early years of their marriage, led a life of perpetual terror; she represented sound sense and foresight in the partnership; she was doubt, opposition, and fear, while César represented boldness, ambition, activity, the element of chance and undreamed-of good luck. In spite of appearances, the merchant was the weaker vessel, and it was the wife who really had the patience and courage. So it had come to pass that a timid mediocrity, without education, knowledge, or strength of character, a being who could in nowise have succeeded in the world's slipperiest places, was taken for a remarkable man, a man of spirit and resolution, thanks to his instinctive uprightness and sense of justice, to the goodness of a truly Christian soul, and love for the one woman who had been his.

The public only see results. Of all César's circle, only Pillerault and Judge Popinot saw beneath the surface; none of the rest could pronounce on his character. Those twenty or thirty friends, moreover, who met at one another's houses, retailed the same platitudes, repeated the same stale commonplaces, and each one among them regarded himself as superior to his company. There was a rivalry among the women in dinners and dress; each one summed up her husband in some contemptuous word.

Mme. Birotteau alone had the good sense to show respect and deference to her husband in public. She saw in him the man who, in spite of his private weaknesses, had made the wealth and earned the esteem which she shared along with him; though she sometimes privately wondered if all men who were spoken of as superior intellects were like her husband. This attitude of hers contributed not a little to maintain the respect and esteem shown by others to the merchant, in a country where wives are quick-witted enough to belittle their husbands and to complain of them. The first days of the year 1814, so fatal to Imperial France, were memorable in the Birotteau household for two events, which would have passed almost unnoticed anywhere else; but they were of a kind to leave a deep impression on simple souls like César and his wife, who, looking back upon their past, found no painful memories.

They had engaged a young man of two-and-twenty, Ferdinand du Tillet by name, as first assistant. The lad had come to them from another house in the perfumery trade, where they had declined to give him a percentage on the profits. He was thought to be a genius, and he had been very anxious to go to the Queen of Roses, knowing the place, and the people, and their ways. Birotteau had engaged him at a salary of a thousand francs, meaning that du Tillet should be his successor. This Ferdinand du Tillet was destined to exercise so great an influence over the family fortunes that a few words must be said about him.

He had begun life simply on his Christian name of Ferdinand. There was an immense advantage in anonymity, he thought, at a time when Napoleon was pressing the young men of every family into the army; but if he had no name, he had been born somewhere, and owed his birth to some cruel or voluptuous fancy. Here, in brief, are the few facts known as to his name and designation.

In 1793 a poor girl of Tillet, a little hamlet near the Andelys, bore a child one night in the curé's garden at Tillet, tapped on the shutters, and then drowned herself. The good man received the child, named him after the saint of that day in the calendar, and reared him as if he had been his own son. In 1804 the curé died, and the little property that he left was insufficient to complete the education thus begun. Ferdinand, thrown upon Paris, there led the life of a freebooter, amid chances that might bring him to the scaffold or to fortune, to the bar, the army, commerce, or private life. Ferdinand, compelled to live like a very Figaro, first became a commercial traveller, then, after travelling round France, and seeing life, became a perfumer's assistant, with a fixed determination to make his way at all costs. In 1813 he considered it expedient to ascertain his age, and to acquire a status as a citizen; he therefore petitioned the Tribunal of the Andelys to transfer the entry of his baptism from the church records to the mayor's register; and, further, he asked that they should insert the surname of du Tillet, which he had assumed, on the ground of his exposure at birth in the commune of that name.

He had neither father nor mother; he had no guardian save the procureur-imperial; he was alone in the world, and owed no account of himself to any one; society was to him a harsh stepdame, and he showed no mercy in his dealings with society, knew no guide but his own interests, found all means of success permissible. The Norman, armed with these dangerous capacities, combined with his desire to succeed the crabbed faults for which the natives of his

province are, rightly or wrongly, blamed. Beneath his insinuating manner there was a contentious spirit; he was a most formidable antagonist—a blustering litigant, disputing another's least rights audaciously, while he never yielded a point himself. He had time on his side, and wearied out his opponent by his inflexible pertinacity. His principal merits were those of the Scapins of old comedy; he possessed their fertility of resource, their skill in sailing near the wind, their itch to seize on what seems good to have and hold. Indeed, he meant to apply to his poverty a motto which the Abbé Terray applied in statecraft; he would make a clean record by turning honest later on.

He was endowed with strenuous energy, with the military intrepidity which demands good deeds or bad indifferently of everybody, justifying his demand by the theory of personal interest; he was bound to succeed; he had too great a scorn of human nature; he believed too firmly that all men have their price; he was too little troubled by scruples as to the choice of means, when all were alike permissible; his eyes were too fixedly set upon the success and wealth that should purchase absolution for a system of morals which worked thus not to be successful.

Such a man, between the convict's prison on the one hand, and millions upon the other, must of necessity become vindictive, domineering, swift in his decisions, a dissembling Cromwell scheming to cut off the head of probity. A light, mocking wit concealed the depth of his character; mere shopman though he was, his ambition knew no bounds; he had comprehended society in one glance of hatred, and said to himself, "You are in my power." He had vowed that he would not marry before he was forty years old. He kept his word with himself.

As to Ferdinand's outward appearance, he was a slim, well-shaped young fellow, with adaptable manners that enabled him at need to take any tone through the whole gamut of society. At first sight his weasel face was not displeasing; but after more observation, you detected the

strange expressions which are visible on the surface of those who are not at peace with themselves, or who hear at times the warning voice of conscience. His hard, high color glowed under the soft Norman skin. There was a furtive look in the wall-eyes, lined with silver leaf, which grew terrible when they were fixed full on his victim. His voice was husky, as if he had been speaking for long. The thin lips were not unpleasing, but the sharply-pointed nose and slightly-rounded forehead revealed a defect of race. Indeed, the coloring of his hair, which looked as if it had been dyed black, indicated the social half-breed, who had his cleverness from a dissolute great lord, his low ideas from the peasant girl, the victim of seduction; who owed his knowledge to an incomplete education; whose vices were those of the waif and stray.

Birotteau learned, to his unbounded amazement, that his assistant went out very elegantly arrayed, came in very late, and went to balls at bankers' and notaries' houses. These habits found no favor with César. To his way of thinking, a shopman should study the ledgers, and think of nothing but the business. The perfumer had no patience with folly. He spoke gently to du Tillet about wearing such fine linen, about visiting cards, which bore the name F. du Tillet—manners and customs which, according to his commercial jurisprudence, should be confined to the fashionable world.

But Ferdinand had established himself in this house to play Tartuffe to Birotteau's Orgon; he paid court to Mme. César, tried to seduce her, and gauging his employer with appalling quickness, judged him as his wife had previously judged. Du Tillet only said what he meant to say, and was both reserved and discreet; but he unveiled opinions of mankind and views of life in a fashion that dismayed a timorous, conscientious woman, who thought it a sin to do the slightest wrong to her neighbor. In spite of the tact which Mme. Birotteau employed, du Tillet felt her contempt for him; and Constance, to whom Ferdinand had written several amorous epistles, soon noticed a change in

the manners of her assistant. He began to behave presumptuously, to give others the impression that there was an understanding between them. Without informing her husband of her private reasons, she recommended him to dismiss the man, and Birotteau was of his wife's opinion on this head. Du Tillet's dismissal was resolved upon; but one evening, on the Saturday before he gave notice, Birotteau balanced his books, as he was wont to do every month, and found that he was three thousand francs short. He was in terrible consternation. It was not so much the actual loss that affected him as the suspicion that hung over his three assistants and the servant, the errand-boy, and the workmen. On whom was he to lay the blame? Mme. Birotteau was never away from the cash desk. The bookkeeper, who lodged in the house, was a young man of eighteen, Popinot by name, a nephew of M. Ragon, and honesty itself. Indeed, on Popinot's own showing, the money was missing, for the cash did not agree with the balance. Husband and wife agreed to say nothing, and to watch every one in the house.

Monday came, and their friends came to spend the evening. Every family in this set entertained in turn. While they played at *bouillotte*, Roguin the notary put down on the table some old louis-d'or which Mme. César had taken some days before of a bride, Mme. d'Espart.

"Have you been robbing the poorbox?" asked the perfumer, laughing.

Roguin said that he had won the money of du Tillet at a banker's house on the previous evening, and du Tillet bore him out in this without a blush. As for the perfumer, he turned crimson. When the visitors had gone, and Ferdinand was about to go to bed, Birotteau called him down into the shop, on pretence of business to discuss.

"We are three thousand francs short in the cash, du Tillet," the good man said, "and I cannot suspect anybody. The matter of the old louis-d'or seems to be too much against you to be passed over entirely, so we will

not go to bed till we have found out the mistake, for, after all, it can be nothing but a mistake. Very likely you took the louis on account of your salary."

Du Tillet owned to having taken the louis. The perfumer thereupon opened the ledger; the assistant's account had not yet been debited with the sum.

"I was in a hurry. I ought to have asked Popinot to enter it," said Ferdinand.

"Quite true," said Birotteau, disconcerted by this offhand coolness. The Norman had taken the measure of the good folk among whom he had come with a view to making his fortune.

The perfumer and his assistant spent the night in checking the books, the worthy merchant knowing all the while that it was trouble thrown away. As he came and went he slipped three banknotes of a thousand francs each into the safe, pressing them between the side of the drawer and the groove in the safe; then he pretended to be tired out, seemed to be fast asleep, and snored. Du Tillet awakened him in triumph, and showed exaggerated delight over the discovery of the mistake.

The next morning Birotteau scolded little Popinot and Mme. César in public, and waxed wrathful over their carelessness.

A fortnight later, Ferdinand du Tillet entered a stockbroker's office. The perfumery trade did not suit him, he said; he wanted to study banking. At the same time, he spoke of Mme. César in a way that gave the impression that motives of jealousy had procured his dismissal.

A few months later du Tillet came to see his late employer, and asked him to be his surety for twenty thousand francs, to complete the guarantees required in a matter which was to put him in the way of making his fortune. Seeing Birotteau's surprise at this piece of effrontery, du Tillet scowled and asked the perfumer whether he had no confidence in him. Matifat and two men with whom Birotteau did business were there at the time; his indignation

did not escape them, though he controlled his anger in their presence. Perhaps du Tillet had returned to honesty; a gambling debt or some woman in distress might have been at the root of that error of his; and the fact that an honest man publicly declined to have anything to do with him might launch a man, still young, and perhaps penitent, on a career of crime and misfortune. The angel of mercy took up the pen and set his signature on du Tillet's papers, saying as he did so that he was heartily glad to do a small service for a lad who had been very useful to him. The color came into the good man's face as he told that kindly lie. Du Tillet could not meet his eyes, and doubtless at that moment vowed an eternal enmity, the truceless hate that the angels of darkness bear the angels of light.

Du Tillet kept his balance so skilfully upon the tight rope of speculation that he was always fashionably dressed, and was apparently rich long before he was rich in reality. When he set up a cabriolet he never put it down again; he held his own in the lofty spheres where pleasure and business are mingled, among the Turcarets of the epoch for whom the crush-room of the Opéra is a branch of the Stock Exchange.

Thanks to Mme. Roguin, whom he had met among the Birotteaus' circle, he became rapidly known in high financial regions. Ferdinand du Tillet had attained a prosperity in nowise delusive; he was on an excellent footing with the firm of Nucingen, to whom Roguin had introduced him; and he had not been slow to secure the Keller connection, and to make friends among the upper banking world. Nobody knew where the young fellow found the vast capital which he could command, but they set down his luck to his intelligence and honesty.

The Restoration made a personage of César Birotteau, and, in the vortex of political crises, he not unnaturally forgot these two cross events in his household. The tenacity with which he had held to his opinions—for though since

his wound it had been a strictly passive tenacity, he still held to his principles for decency's sake—had brought him patronage in high quarters, precisely because he had asked for nothing. He received an appointment as major in the National Guard, though he did not so much as know a single word of command.

In 1815 Napoleon, inimical as ever to Birotteau, ejected him from his post. During the Hundred Days, Birotteau became the *bête noire* of the Liberals in his quarter; for party feeling began to run high in that year among the commercial class, who hitherto had been unanimous in voting for peace for business reasons.

After the second Restoration, the Royalist Government found it necessary to manipulate the municipal body. The prefect wanted to transform Birotteau into a mayor, but, thanks to his wife, the perfumer accepted the less conspicuous position of deputy-mayor. His modesty added not a little to his reputation, and brought him the friendship of the mayor, M. Flamet de la Billardière. Birotteau, who had seen him at the Queen of Roses in the days when Royalist plotters used to meet at Ragon's shop, suggested his name to the Prefect of the Seine, who consulted the perfumer on the choice. M. and Mme. Birotteau were never forgotten in the mayor's invitations, and Mme. Birotteau often asked for charitable subscriptions at Saint-Roch in good society.

La Billardière warmly supported Birotteau when it was proposed to distribute the Crosses awarded to the municipal body; when names were being weighed, he laid stress upon César's wound received at Saint-Roch, on his attachment to the Bourbons, and on the respect in which Birotteau was held. So the minister who, while he endeavored to undo the work of Napoleon, was wishful to make creatures of his own, and to secure partisans for the Bourbons from the ranks of commerce, and among men of art and science, included Birotteau in the list of those to be distinguished.

This favor, together with the glory which César already

shed around him in his Arrondissement, put him in a position that was bound to magnify the ideas of a man who had met hitherto with nothing but success; and when the mayor told him of the approaching distinction, it was the final argument which urged the perfumer into the speculation which he had just disclosed to his wife; for it opened up a way of quitting the perfumery trade, and of rising to the upper ranks of the Parisian bourgeoisie.

César was forty years old. Hard work at his factory had set one or two premature wrinkles in his face, and slightly silvered the long bushy hair, on which the constant pressure of his hat had impressed a glossy ring. The outlines of his hair described five points on the forehead, which told a story of simplicity of life. There was nothing alarming about the bushy eyebrows, for the blue eyes, with their clear, straightforward expression, were in keeping with the honest man's brow. His nose, broken at his birth, and blunt at the tip, gave him the astonished look of the typical Parisian cockney. His lips were very thick, his chin heavy and straight. It was a high-colored face with square outlines, and a peculiar disposition of the wrinkles—altogether it was of the ingenuous, shrewd peasant type; and his evident physical strength, his sturdy limbs, broad shoulders, and big feet, all denoted the countryman transported to Paris. The large hands, covered with hair, the creases in the plump finger-joints, and broad, square-shaped nails at the tips, would alone have attested his origin if there had not been signs of it about his whole person.

He always wore the bland smile with which a shopkeeper welcomes a customer; but this smile, assumed for business purposes in his case, was the outward and visible expression of inward content, and reflected the serenity of a kindly soul. His distrust of his species was strictly confined to the business; he parted company with his shrewdness as he came away from the Exchange or shut his ledger. Suspicion for him was one of the exigencies of business, like his printed billheads.

There was a comical mixture of assurance, fatuity, and good-nature in his face, which gave it a certain character of its own, and redeemed it, to some extent, from the vapid uniformity of Parisian bourgeois countenances. But for that expression of artless wonder and trustfulness, people would have stood too much in awe of him; it was thus that he paid his quota of absurdity that put him on a footing of equality with his kind.

It was a habit of his to cross his hands behind him while speaking; and when he meant to say something particularly civil or striking, he gradually raised himself on tiptoe once or twice, and came down heavily upon his heels, as if to emphasize his remark. Sometimes in the height of a discussion he would suddenly swing himself round, take a step or two as if in search of objections, and then turn abruptly upon his opponent. He never interrupted anybody, and not seldom fell a victim to his finer punctilious observance of good manners, for others did not scruple to take the words out of his mouth, and when the worthy man came away he had been unable to put in a word.

In his wide experience of business he had acquired habits which others sometimes described as a mania. For instance, if a bill had not been met, he would put it in the hands of the process-server, and gave himself no further trouble about it, save to receive the capital, interest, and court expenses. The matter might drive the customer into bankruptcy, and then César went no further. He never attended a meeting of creditors; his name never appeared in any list; he kept his claims. This system, together with an implacable contempt for bankrupts, had been handed down to him by old M. Ragon, who, after a long commercial experience, had come to the conclusion that the meagre and uncertain dividend paid under the circumstances was a very poor return for the time wasted in law proceedings, and held that he could spend his time to better purpose than in running about after excuses for dishonesty.

"If the bankrupt is an honest man, and makes his way

again, he will pay you," M. Ragon was wont to say. "If he has nothing, and is simply unfortunate, what is the good of tormenting him? And if he is a rogue, you will get nothing in any case. If you have a name for being hard on people, they will not try to make terms with you; and so long as they can pay at all, you are the man whom they will pay."

César kept his appointments punctually; he would wait for ten minutes, and nothing would induce him to stay any longer, a characteristic which was a cause of punctuality in others who had to do with him.

His dress was in keeping with his appearance and habits. No power on earth would have induced him to resign the white lawn neckcloths with drooping ends, embroidered by his wife or daughter. His white drill waistcoats, adorned with a double row of buttons, descended low upon his prominent abdomen, for Birotteau was inclined to corpulence. He wore blue breeches, black silk stockings, and walking-shoes adorned with ribbon bows that were apt to come unfastened. Out of doors his too ample green overcoat and broad-brimmed hat gave him a somewhat Quakerly appearance. On Sunday evenings he wore a coat of chestnut-brown cloth, with long tails and ample skirts, and black silk breeches; the corners of the inevitable waistcoat were turned down a little to display the pleated shirt-front beneath, and there were gold buckles on his shoes. Until the year 1819 his person was further adorned by two parallel lines of watch-chain, but he only wore the second when in full dress.

Such was César Birotteau—a worthy soul, from whom the mysterious powers that preside at the making of man had withheld the faculty of seeing life or politics as a whole, and the capacity of rising above the social level of the lower middle class; in all things he was destined to follow in the ruts of the old road; he had caught his opinions like an infection, and he put them in practice without examining into them. But if he was blind, he was a good man; if he was not very clever, he was deeply religious, and his heart was

pure. In that heart there shone but one love, the light of his life and its motive-power; for his desire to rise in the world, like the meagre knowledge that he had learned in it, had its source in his love for his wife and daughter.

As for Mme. César, at that time, at the age of thirty-seven, she so exactly resembled the Venus of Milo that, when the Duc de Rivière sent the beautiful statue to France, all her acquaintance recognized the likeness. A few short months, and trouble, so swiftly spread its sallow tinge over the dazzling fairness of her face, so ruthlessly darkened and hollowed the blue-veined circles in which the beautiful hazel eyes were set, that she came to look like an aged Madonna; for in the wreck of her beauty she never lost her sweet ingenuousness, though there was a sad expression in the clear eyes; and it was impossible not to see in her a still beautiful woman, staid in her demeanor, and full of dignity. Moreover, during this ball of César's planning, her beauty was to shine forth radiantly for the last time to the admiration of beholders.

Every life has its apogee; there is a time in every existence when active causes bring about exactly proportionate results. This high noon of life, when the vital forces are evenly balanced and put forth in all the glory of their strength, is common not only to organic life; you will find it even in the history of cities and nations and institutions and ideas, in commerce, and in every kind of human effort, for, like noble families and dynasties, these too have their birth and rise and fall.

How comes it that this argument of waxing and waning is applied so inexorably to everything throughout the system of things?—to death as to life; for in times of pestilence, death runs his course, abates, returns again, lies dormant. Who knows but that our globe itself is a rocket somewhat longer lived than other fireworks?

History, telling over and over again the reasons of the rise and fall of all that has been in the world in the past, might be a warning to man that there is a moment when the

active play of all his faculties must cease; but neither conquerors, nor actors, nor women, nor writers heed the wholesome admonition. César Birotteau, who should have looked upon himself as having reached the apogee of his career, mistook the summit for the starting-point. He did not know the reason of the downfalls of which history is full; nay, neither kings nor peoples have made any effort to engrave in imperishable characters the causes of the catastrophes of which the history of royal and of commercial houses affords such conspicuous examples. Why should not pyramids be reared anew to put us constantly in mind of the immutable law which should govern the affairs of nations as well as of individuals: *When the effect produced is no longer in direct relation with nor in exact proportion to the cause, disorganization sets in?* And yet—these monuments are all about us—in legends, in the stones that cry out to us of a past, and bear perpetual record to the freaks of a stubborn Fate whose hand sweeps away our illusions, and makes it clear to us that the greatest events resolve themselves at last into an Idea, and the "Tale of Troy" and the "Story of Napoleon" are poems and nothing more.

Would that this story might be the Epic of the Bourgeoisie; there are dealings of Fate with man which inspire no voice, because they lack grandeur, yet are even for that very reason immense: for this is not the story of an isolated soul, but of a whole nation of sorrows.

César as he dropped off to sleep feared that his wife might bring forward some peremptory objection in the morning, and laid it upon himself to wake betimes and settle everything. As soon as it grew light, he rose noiselessly, leaving his wife asleep, dressed quickly, and went down into the shop just as the boy was taking down the numbered shutters. Birotteau, finding himself in solitary possession, stood waiting in the doorway for the assistants, watching critically meanwhile the way in which Raguet the errand boy discharged his duties, for Birotteau was an old hand. The weather was magnificent in spite of the cold.

"Popinot, fetch your hat and your walking shoes, and tell M. Célestin to come down; you and I will go to the Tuileries and have a little talk together," said he, when Anselme came.

Popinot, that admirable foil to du Tillet, whom one of those happy chances which induce a belief in a protecting Providence had established in César's household, will play so great a part in this story, that it is necessary to give a sketch of him here.

Mme. Ragon's maiden name was Popinot. She had two brothers. One of them, the youngest of the family, was at the present time a judge in the Tribunal of First Instance of the Seine. The older had gone into the wool-trade, had lost his patrimony, and died, leaving his only son to the Ragons and his brother the judge, who had no children. The child's mother had died at his birth.

Mme. Ragon had found this situation for her nephew, and hoped to see him succeed to Birotteau. Anselme Popinot (for that was his name) was short and club-footed, a dispensation common to Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and Talleyrand, lest others thus afflicted should be too much discouraged. He had the brilliant complexion covered with freckles which usually distinguishes red-haired people; but a clear forehead, eyes like agates streaked with gray, pretty mouth, a pale face, the charm of youthful diffidence, and a want of confidence in himself, due to his physical deformity, aroused a kindly feeling toward him in others. We love the weak, and people felt interested in Popinot.

Little Popinot, as everybody called him, took after his family. They were people essentially religious, whose virtues were informed by intelligence, whose quiet lives were full of good deeds. So the child, brought up by his uncle the judge, united all the qualities pleasing in youth; he was a good and affectionate boy, a little bashful, but full of enthusiasm; docile as a lamb, but hard-working, faithful, and steady, endowed with all the virtues of a Christian in the early days of the Church.

When Popinot heard of the proposed walk to the Tuileries, the most unlooked-for remark that his awe-inspiring employer could have made at that time of day, his thoughts went to his own settlement in life, and thence all at once to Césarine, the real queen of roses, the living sign of the house. He had fallen in love on his very first day in the shop, two months before du Tillet's departure. He was obliged to stop more than once on his way upstairs, his heart so swelled, and his pulses beat so hard.

In another moment he came down, followed by Célestin, the first assistant. Then Anselme and his employer set out without a word for the Tuileries.

Anselme Popinot was just twenty-one years of age; Birotteau had married at one-and-twenty, so Anselme saw no hindrance to his marriage with Césarine on that score. It was her beauty and her father's wealth that set enormous obstacles in the way of such ambitious wishes as his, but love grows with every upleaping of hope; the wilder the hopes, the more he clung to them, and his longings grew the stronger for the distance between him and his love. Happy boy, who in a time when all and sundry are brought down to the same level, when every head is crowned with a precisely similar hat, can still contrive to create a distance between a perfumer's daughter and himself—the scion of an old Parisian family! And he was happy, in spite of his doubts and fears; every day of his life he sat next to Césarine at dinner; he set about his business with a zeal and enthusiasm that left no element of drudgery in his work; he did everything in the name of Césarine, and never wearied. At one-and-twenty devotion is food sufficient for love.

"He will be a merchant some of these days; he will get on," César would say, speaking of Anselme to Mme. Ragon, and he would praise Anselme's activity in the filling-out department, extolling his quickness at comprehending the mysteries of the craft, relating how that, when goods were to be sent off in a hurry, Anselme would roll up his sleeves and work bare-armed at packing the cases and nailing down

the lids, and the lame lad would do more than all the rest of them put together.

There was another serious obstacle in the way of the orphan's success. It was a well-known and recognized fact that Alexander Crottat, Roguin's head-clerk, the son of a rich farmer of la Brie, hoped to marry Césarine; and there were other difficulties yet more formidable. In the depths of Popinot's heart there lay buried sad secrets which set a yet wider gulf between him and Césarine. The Ragons, on whom he might have counted, were in difficulties; the orphan boy was happy to take them his scanty salary to help them to eke out a living. But in spite of all these things, he hoped to succeed! More than once he had caught a glance from Césarine, and beneath her apparent pride he had dared to read a secret thought full of tender hopes in the depths of her blue eyes. So he worked on, set in a ferment by that gleam of hope, tremulous and mute, like all young men in a like case when life is breaking into blossom.

"Popinot," the good man began, "is your aunt quite well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Somehow she has seemed to me to have an anxious look for some time past; can something have gone askew with them? Look here, my boy, you must not make a stranger of me, that am almost like one of the family, for I have known your Uncle Ragon these five-and-twenty years. When I first came to him, I was fresh from the country, and wore a pair of hobnailed boots. They call the place the Treasury Farm, but all I brought away with me was one gold louis which my godmother gave me, Madame the late Marquise d'Uxelles, who was related to le Duc and Mme. la Duchesse de Lenoncourt, who are among our patrons. So I always say a prayer every Sunday for her and all the family; and her niece, Mme. de Mortsauf, in Touraine, has all her perfumery from us. Customers are always coming to me through them. There is M. de Vandenesse, for example, who spends twelve hundred francs with us every year. One

ought to be grateful from prudence, if one is not grateful by nature; but I am a well-wisher to you, without an afterthought, and for your own sake."

"Ah, sir, if you will allow me to say so, you had a level head."

"No, my boy, no; that won't do everything. I don't say that my headpiece isn't as good as another's, but I stuck to honesty through thick and thin; I was steady, and I never loved any one but my wife. Love is a fine *vehicle*, a neat expression of M. de Villèle's yesterday at the Tribune."

"Love!" cried Popinot. "Oh! sir, do you—?"

"Stop a bit, stop a bit! There is old Roguin coming along the further side of the Place Louis XV. at eight o'clock in the morning. What can the old boy be about?" said César to himself, and he forgot Anselme Popinot and the hazel-nut oil.

His wife's theories came up in his memory, and instead of turning into the garden of the Tuileries, he walked on to meet the notary. Anselme followed at a distance, quite at a loss to explain the sudden interest which Birotteau appeared to take in a matter so unimportant; but very happy in the encouragement which he derived from his employer's little speech about hobnailed boots, and louis-d'or, and love.

Roguin, a tall, burly man, with a pimpled face, an almost bald forehead, and black hair, had not formerly been lacking in comeliness; and he had been young and ambitious once too, and from a mere clerk had come to be a notary; but now a keen observer would have read in his face the exhaustion and fatigue of a jaded seeker after pleasure. When a man plunges into the mire of excess, his face hardly escapes without a splash, and the lines engraved on Roguin's countenance and its florid color were alike ignoble. Instead of the pure glow which suffuses the tissues of men of temperate life and imparts a bloom of health, there was visible in Roguin the tainted blood inflamed by a strain against which the body rebelled. His nose was meanly turned up at the end, as is apt to be the case with those in whom humors taking this

channel induce an internal affection, which a virtuous Queen of France innocently believed to be a misfortune common to the species, never having approached any man but the King sufficiently closely to discover her mistake. Roguin's efforts to disguise his infirmity by taking quantities of Spanish snuff served rather to aggravate the troublesome symptoms, which had been the principal cause of his misfortunes.

Is it not carrying flattery of society somewhat too far to paint individuals always in false colors, to conceal in certain cases the real causes of their vicissitudes, so often brought about by disease? Physical ills, in their moral aspects and the influences that they bring to bear on the mechanism of life, have perhaps been too much neglected hitherto by the historian of manners. Mme. César had rightly guessed the secret of Roguin's married life.

His wife, a charming girl, the only daughter of Chevrel, the banker, felt an unconquerable repugnance for the poor notary, which dated from the night of her marriage, and had been determined to demand an immediate divorce. But Roguin, too happy to have a wife who brought him five hundred thousand francs, to say nothing of her expectations, had implored her not to enter her plea, leaving her her liberty, and accepting all the consequences of such a compact. Mme. Roguin, mistress of the situation, treated her husband as a courtesan treats an elderly adorer. Roguin soon found his wife too dear, and, like many another Parisian, had a second establishment in the town. At first the expenditure did not exceed a moderate limit.

For a while Roguin found, at no great outlay, grisettes who were too glad of his protection; but at the end of three years he fell a prey to a violent sexagenarian passion for one of the most magnificent creatures of the time, known as La belle Hollandaise in the calendars of prostitution, for she shortly afterward fell back into that gulf, which her death made illustrious. One of Roguin's clients had formerly brought her to Paris from Bruges; and when, in 1815, political considerations forced him to fly, he made her over

to the notary. Roguin had taken a little house in the Champs-Élysées for his enchantress; he had furnished it handsomely, and had allowed himself to be led by her, until he had squandered away his fortune to satisfy her extravagant whims.

The gloomy expression, which vanished from Roguin's countenance at the sight of his client, was connected with mysterious events, wherein lay the secret of du Tillet's rapid success. While du Tillet was still under Birotteau's roof, on the first Sunday which gave him an opportunity of observing how M. and Mme. Roguin were situated with regard to each other, his plans had undergone a change. His designs upon Mme. César had been subordinated to another purpose; he had meant to compel an offer of Césarine's hand as compensation for repulsed advances; but it cost him the less to give up this marriage since he had discovered that César was not rich, as he had believed. Then du Tillet played the spy on the notary, insinuated himself into his confidence, obtained an introduction to La belle Hollandaise, ascertained the terms on which she stood with Roguin, and learned that she was threatening to dismiss her adorer if he curtailed her extravagance. La belle Hollandaise was one of those scatterbrained creatures who take money without disturbing themselves as to how it was made, or how they come by it; women who would give a banquet with a parricide's crowns. She took no thought for the morrow, and was careless of yesterday. The future for her meant after dinner, and eternity lay between the present moment and the end of the month, even when she had bills to fall due. Du Tillet was delighted to find a first lever to his hand, and began his campaign by obtaining a reduction from La belle Hollandaise, who agreed to solace Roguin's existence for thirty thousand francs instead of fifty thousand, a kind of service which sexagenarian passion rarely forgets.

At length, one night after deep potations, Roguin opened out his financial position to du Tillet in an after-supper confidence. His real estate was mortgaged to its full value under

his wife's marriage settlement, and in his infatuation he had appropriated moneys deposited with him by his clients; more than half the value of his practice had been embezzled in this way. When he had run through the rest, the unfortunate Roguin would blow his brains out, for he thought he should diminish the scandal of his failure by exciting the pity of the public. Du Tillet, listening, beheld success, rapid and assured, gleaming like a flash of lightning through the obscurity of drunkenness. He reassured Roguin, and repaid his confidence by persuading him to fire his pistols into the air.

"When a man of your calibre takes such risks upon himself," said he, "he ought not to flounder about like a fool; he should set to work boldly."

Du Tillet counselled Roguin to help himself to a large sum of money, and to intrust it to him (du Tillet) to speculate boldly with it on the Stock Exchange, or in some other enterprise among the hundreds that were being started at that speculative epoch. If the stroke were successful, the two of them should found a bank, speculate with the deposits, and with the profits the notary should satisfy his cravings. If the luck went against them, Roguin should go abroad, instead of killing himself, for his devoted du Tillet would be faithful to the last penny. It was a rope flung out to a drowning man, and Roguin did not see that the perfumer's salesman was fastening it round his neck.

Du Tillet, master of Roguin's secret, used it to establish his power over the wife, the husband, and the mistress. Mme. Roguin, to whom he gave warning of a disaster which she was far from suspecting, accepted du Tillet's assiduities, and then it was that the latter left the perfumer's shop, feeling that his future was secure. It was not difficult to persuade the mistress to risk a sum of money that in case of need she might not be obliged to go on the street. The wife looked into her affairs, and accumulated a small amount of capital, which she handed over to the man in whom her husband placed confidence, for at the outset the notary put a hundred thousand francs

into the hands of his accomplice. Brought in this way into close contact with Mme. Roguin, du Tillet contrived to transform interest into affection, and to inspire a violent passion in that handsome woman. In his speculations on the Stock Exchange he naturally shared in the profits of his three associates, but this was not enough for him; he had the audacity to come to an understanding with an opponent, who refunded to him the amount of fictitious losses, for he played for his own hand as well as for his clients.

As soon as he had fifty thousand francs, he was sure of making a large fortune. He watched with the eagle's eye that was one of his characteristics over the phases of political life in France; he speculated for a fall in the Funds during the campaign of France, and for a rise when the Bourbons came back.

Two months after the return of Louis XVIII., Mme. Roguin possessed two hundred thousand francs, and du Tillet a hundred thousand crowns. In the notary's eyes this young man was an angel; he had restored order in his affairs. But La belle Hollandaise fell a victim to a wasting complaint which nothing could cure, a virulent cancer called Maxime de Trailles, one of the late Emperor's pages. Du Tillet discovered the woman's real name from her signature to a document. It was Sarah Gobseck. Then he remembered that he had heard of a money-lender of the name of Gobseck; and, struck by the coincidence, paid a visit to that aged discounter of bills, and providence of young men with prospects, to find out how this female relative's credit stood with him. The bill-broking Brutus proved inexorable where his grandniece was concerned, but du Tillet himself managed to find favor in his eyes by posing as Sarah's banker with capital to invest. The Norman and the money-lender found each other congenial.

Gobseck wanted a clever young fellow who could look after a bit of business abroad for him just then. The return of the Bourbons had taken a State auditor by surprise.

To this financier, wishful to stand well at Court, it had occurred that he might buy up the debts contracted by the Princes in Germany during the emigration. He offered the profits of the affair, which for him was purely a matter of policy, to any one who would advance the necessary money. Old Gobseck had no mind to disburse moneys over and above the market value of the debts, into which a shrewd representative must first examine. Money-lenders trust nobody; they must always have a guarantee; the occasion is omnipotent with them; they are ice when they have no need of a man, affable and obliging when he is likely to be useful. Du Tillet knew the immense part played, below the surface, in the Paris money market by Werbrust and Gigonnet, discount brokers of the Rue Saint-Denis and Rue Saint-Martin, and by Palma, a banker in the Faubourg Poissonnière, who was almost always associated with Gobseck. He therefore offered to pay down caution money, requiring, on his own side, a share in the profits of the transaction, and asking that these gentlemen should employ in the money-lending business the capital which he should deposit with them. In this way he secured supporters. Then he accompanied M. Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx on a trip to Germany during the Hundred Days, and came back with the Second Restoration, with some added knowledge that should lead to success rather than with actual wealth. He had had an initiation into the secrets of one of the cleverest schemers in Paris; he had won the goodwill of the man whom he had been set to watch; a dexterous juggler had laid bare for him the springs of political intrigue and the rules of the game.

Du Tillet's intelligence was of the order which understands at half a word; this journey formed him. On his return he found Mme. Roguin still faithful; but the poor notary was expecting Ferdinand with quite as much impatience as his wife. La belle Hollandaise had ruined him again!

Du Tillet, questioning La belle Hollandaise, could not

elicit from her an account that represented all the money which she had squandered. And then it was that he discovered the secret so carefully kept from him—Sarah Gobseck's infatuation for Maxime de Trailles, known at the very outset of his career of vice and debauchery for a political hanger-on of a kind indispensable to all good government, and for an insatiable gambler. After this discovery du Tillet understood old Gobseck's indifference to his grandniece.

At this critical juncture, du Tillet the banker (for by this time he was a banker) strongly recommended Roguin to put by something for a rainy day; to engage some of his richest clients in a business speculation, and then to keep back considerable sums out of the money paid over to him, in case he should be compelled to become a bankrupt in the course of a second career of speculation. After various rises and falls in the price of stocks, which brought luck only to du Tillet and Mme. Roguin, the notary's hour struck. He was insolvent, and thereupon, in his extremity, his closest friend exploited him, and du Tillet discovered that speculation in building land in the neighborhood of the Madeleine. Naturally, one hundred thousand francs which Birotteau had deposited with Roguin until an investment should be found for them, were paid over to du Tillet, who, bent upon compassing the perfumer's ruin, made Roguin understand that he ran less risk by insnaring his own intimate friends in his toils.

"A friend," said du Tillet, "will not go all lengths even in anger."

There are not many people at this present day who know how little land was worth per foot in the district of the Madeleine at this time; but the building lots must necessarily shortly be sold for more than their momentary depreciation, caused by the necessity of finding purchasers who would profit by the opportunity. Now it was du Tillet's idea to reap the benefit without keeping his money locked up in a lengthy speculation. In other words, he meant to kill the

affair, so that a corpse which he knew how to resuscitate might be knocked down to him.

In such emergencies as this, the Gobsecks, Palmas, Werbrusts, and Gigonnets all lent each other a hand, but du Tillet did not know them well enough to ask them to help him; and, besides, he meant to hide his action in the matter so thoroughly that, while he steered the whole business, he might receive all the profits and none of the disgrace of the robbery. So he saw the necessity of one of those animated lay figures termed *men of straw* in commercial phrase. The man who had once before acted the part of a stockjobber for him seemed to be a suitable tool to his hand, and he infringed the Divine rights by creating a man. Of a former commercial traveller, without a farthing on this earth, with no ability, no capacity save for empty rambling talk on all sorts of subjects, and but just sufficient wit to suffer himself to be drilled in a part and to play it without compromising the piece, and yet endowed with the rarest sense of honor—that is to say, a faculty for silently accepting the dishonor of his principal—of him, du Tillet made a banker, the originator and promoter of commercial enterprises on the largest scale; him he metamorphosed into the head of the firm of Claparon.

Should the exigencies of du Tillet's affairs at any time demand a bankruptcy, it was to be Charles Claparon's fate to be delivered over to Jews and Pharisees, and Claparon knew it. Still, for the present, the scraps and pickings that fell to his share were an El Dorado for a poor devil who, when his chum du Tillet came across him, was sauntering along the Boulevards with no prospects beyond the two-franc piece in his pockets; so his friendship for and devotion to du Tillet, swelled by a gratitude that did not look to the future, and stimulated by the cravings of a dissolute and disreputable life, led him to say *Amen* to everything.

When he had once sold his honor, he saw that it was risked with so much prudence that at length he came to

have a sort of doglike attachment for his old comrade du Tillet. Claparon was a very ugly performing poodle, but he was ready at any moment to make the leap of Curtius for his master.

In the present scheme Claparon was to represent one-half of the purchasers of the lots, as Birotteau represented the other half. Then the bills which Claparon would receive from Birotteau should be discounted by some money-lender, whose name du Tillet would borrow; so that when Roguin absconded with the rest of the purchase-money, Birotteau would be left on the brink of ruin. Du Tillet meant to direct the action of the assignees; there should be a forced sale of the building land, and du Tillet meant to be the purchaser; he would buy it for about half its value, and pay for it with Roguin's money and the dividend of the bankruptcy; so under different names he was in possession of the money paid down by the perfumer and his creditor to boot.

It was a prospect of a goodly share of the spoils that led Roguin to meddle in this scheme; but he had practically surrendered himself at discretion to a man who could and did take the lion's part. It was impossible to bring du Tillet into a court of law, and the notary in a remote part of Switzerland, where he found beauties of a less expensive kind, was lucky to have a bone flung to him once a month or so.

The ugly scheme was no deliberate invention, no outcome of the broodings of a tragedian weaving a plot, but the result of circumstance. Hatred, unaccompanied by a desire for revenge, is as seed sown upon the granite rock: du Tillet swore to be revenged upon César Birotteau, and the prompting was one of the most natural things in the world; if it had been otherwise, there had been no quarrel between angels of darkness and the angels of light.

Du Tillet could not, without great inconvenience, murder the one man in Paris who knew that he had been guilty of petty theft; but he could sully his old master's name and

crush him until his testimony was no longer admissible. For a long time past the thought of vengeance had been germinating in his mind; but it had come to nothing. The rush of life in Paris is so swift, and so full of stir, chance counts for so much in it, that even the most energetic haters do not look very far ahead; yet, on the other hand, if the constant ebb and flow is unfavorable to premeditated action, it affords excellent opportunities for carrying out projects that lurk in politic brains, clever enough to lie in wait for the chances that come with the tide. Du Tillet had had a dim inkling of the possibility of ruining César from the moment when Roguin first opened out his case to him; and he had not miscalculated.

Roguin, meanwhile, on the point of leaving his idol, drained the rest of the philtre from the broken cup, going daily to the Champs-Élysées, and returning home in the small hours. There were grounds, therefore, for Mme. César's suspicious theories. When a man has made up his mind to play such a part as du Tillet had assigned to Roguin, he perforce acquires the talents of a great actor; he has the eyes of a lynx and the penetration of a seer; he finds ways of magnetizing his dupe, so the notary had seen Birotteau long before Birotteau set eyes on him; and when he saw that he was recognized, he held out a hand while he was still at some distance.

"I have just been making the will of a great person who has not a week to live," said he, with the most natural air in the world, "but they have treated me like a village doctor —sent a carriage to fetch me, and let me go home afoot."

A slight cloud of suspicion which had darkened the perfumer's brows cleared away at these words; but Roguin had noticed it, and took good care not to be the first to speak about the building land, for he meant to give his victim the finishing stroke.

"After a will come marriage-contracts," said Birotteau; "such is life. Ah, by the by, Roguin, old fellow, when do we make a match of it with the Madeleine, eh?" and

he tapped the other on the chest. Among men, the best-conducted bourgeois will try to appear a bit of a rogue with the women.

"Well, it is to-day or never," returned the notary with a diplomatic look. "We are afraid that the affair will get noised abroad; already two of my richest clients want to go into the speculation, and are very keen about it. So you can take it or leave it. After twelve o'clock this morning I shall draw up the deeds, and until one o'clock it is open to you to join us if you choose. Good-by. Xandrot made a rough draft of the documents for me last night, and I am about to read them through this very minute."

"All right, the thing is settled, you have my word," cried Birotteau, hurrying after the notary, and striking hands upon it. "Take the hundred thousand francs that were to have been my daughter's portion."

"Good," said Roguin, as he walked away.

In the brief interval as Birotteau returned to young Popinot he felt a sensation of feverish heat run through him, his diaphragm contracted, sounds rang in his ears.

"What is the matter, sir?" asked the assistant, looking at his employer's pale face.

"Ah, my boy, I have just concluded a big piece of business with a single word. No one in such a position can help feeling some emotion. You know all about it, however; and besides, I brought you here so that we could talk comfortably where no one will listen to us. Your aunt is pinched; what did she lose her money in? Tell me about it."

"My uncle and aunt put their capital into M. Nucingen's bank, and were obliged to take over shares in the Worstchin mines in settlement of their claims; no dividends have been paid on them as yet, and at their time of life it is difficult to live on hope."

"Then how do they live?"

"They have been so good as to accept my salary."

"Good, Anselme, good," said the perfumer, looking up

with a tear in his eyes; "you are worthy of the attachment I feel for you. And you shall be well rewarded for your application in my service."

As he spoke, the merchant grew greater in his own estimation as well as in Popinot's eyes; a sense of his adventitious superiority was artlessly revealed in his homely and paternal way of speaking.

"What! Can you have guessed my passion for—?"

"For whom?" asked the perfumer.

"For Mademoiselle Césarine."

"Boy!" cried Birotteau, "you are very bold. But keep your secret carefully; I promise to forget it, and you shall go out of the house to-morrow. I don't blame you; the devil no! In your place I should have done just the same. She is so pretty."

"Ah, sir!" cried the assistant, in such a perspiration that his shirt felt damp.

"This cannot be settled in a day, my boy. Césarine is her own mistress, and her mother has her ideas. So keep yourself to yourself, wipe your eyes, hold your heart well in hand, and we will say no more about it. I should not blush to have you for a son-in-law. As the nephew of M. Popinot, judge of a Tribunal of First Instance, and as the Ragons' nephew, you have as good a right to make your way as another, but there are *ifs* and *buts* and *ands!* What a devil of a notion you have sprung upon me in the middle of a talk about business! There, sit you down on that bench, and business first and love affairs after.—Now, Popinot, is there mettle in you?" said Birotteau, looking at his assistant. "Do you feel that you have courage enough to wrestle with those that are stronger than you? for a hand-to-hand fight, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"To keep up a long and dangerous combat—?"

"What is it?"

"To drive Macassar Oil from the field!" cried Birotteau, drawing himself up like one of Plutarch's heroes. "We

must not undervalue the enemy; he is strong, well intrenched, and formidable. Macassar Oil has been well pushed. It is a clever idea, and the shape of the bottles is out of the common. I had thoughts of a triangular bottle for this plan of mine, but after mature reflection, I am inclined for little blown glass flasks covered with wicker work; they would look mysterious, and the public like anything that tickles their curiosity."

"It would cost a good deal," said Popinot. "Everything ought to be on the cheapest possible footing, so as to allow a heavy discount to the trade."

"Right, my boy; those are sound principles of business. Bear in mind that Macassar Oil will show fight! 'Tis a specious thing; the name is attractive. It is put before the public as a foreign importation, and we, unluckily, are in our own country. Look here, Popinot, do you feel strong enough to do for Macassar? To begin with, you will oust it from the export trade; it seems that Macassar really does come from the Indies, so it is more natural to send French goods to the Indians than to ship them back the stuff that they are supposed to send to us. So there's the export trade for you! But it will have to be fought out abroad, and all over the country; and Macassar Oil has been so well advertised that it is no use blinking the fact that it has a hold; it is pushed everywhere, and the public are familiar with it."

"I will do for it!" cried Popinot, with eyes on fire.

"And how?" returned Birotteau. "It is like the impetuosity of these young people! Just hear me out."

Anselme looked like a soldier presenting arms to a Marshal of France.

"I have invented an oil, Popinot, an oil which invigorates the scalp, stimulates the growth of the hair, and preserves its color—an oil for both sexes. The essence should have no less success than the Pate and the Lotion, but I do not want to exploit the secret by myself; I am thinking of retiring from business. I want *you*, my boy, to bring out the *Comagen*—from the Latin word *coma*, which means hair

(so M. Alibert, physician to the King, told me). In 'Bérénice,' Racine's tragedy, too, there is a king of Comagène, a lover of the beautiful queen who was so famous for her hair; no doubt it was out of compliment to her that he called his kingdom Comagène. How clever these great men of genius are! they descend to the smallest details."

Little Popinot listened to these incongruities, evidently meant for his benefit, who had had some education, and yet kept his countenance.

"Anselme," continued Birotteau, "I have cast my eyes on you as the founder of a wholesale druggist's business in the Rue des Lombards. I will be a sleeping-partner, and find you the capital to start with. When we have begun with the Comagen, we will try essence of vanilla and essence of peppermint. In short, by degrees we will go into the drug trade and revolutionize it, by selling articles in a concentrated form instead of the raw products. Are you satisfied, ambitious young man?"

Anselme was so overcome that he could not reply, but his tear-filled eyes made answer for him. It seemed to him that this offer was the outcome of a fatherly indulgence which said, "Deserve Césarine by earning wealth and respect."

"I too will succeed, sir," he said at last, taking Birotteau's emotion for astonishment.

"Just what I was at your age," cried the perfumer; "those were just the very words I used! Whether you have my daughter or no, at any rate you will have a fortune. Well, my boy, what has come to you?"

"Let me hope that by gaining the one I may win the other."

"I do not forbid you to hope, my dear fellow," said Birotteau, touched by Anselme's tone.

"Very well, sir; may I begin to look out at once for a shop, so as to begin as soon as possible?"

"Yes, my boy. To-morrow we will shut ourselves up in the factory. You might look in at Livingston's on your way

to the Rue des Lombards, and see if my hydraulic press will be in working order by to-morrow. To-night, at dinner-time, we will go to see that great man, kind M. Vauquelin, and ask him about this. He has been investigating the composition of hair quite lately, trying to find out its coloring matter, and where it comes from, and what hair is made of.—It all lies in that, Popinot. You shall know my secret, and all that remains to do is to exploit it intelligently.—Look in at Pieri Bérard's before you go round to Livingston.—My boy, M. Vauquelin's disinterestedness is one of the great troubles of my life. You cannot get him to accept anything. Luckily, I found out from Chiffreville that he wanted a Madonna at Dresden, engraved by one Müller, and after two years of inquiry for it in Germany, Bérard has found a copy at last —a proof before letters on India paper; it cost fifteen hundred francs, my boy. And now to-day our benefactor shall see it in the antechamber when he comes to the door with us; framed, of course, you will make sure of that. So in that way we shall recall ourselves to his memory, my wife and I, for as to gratitude, we have put his name in our prayers every day these sixteen years. For my part, I shall never forget him; but, you know, Popinot, these men of science are so deep in their work that they forget everything, wife and children, and those they have done a good turn to. As for the like of us, our little intelligence permits us to have warm hearts at any rate. That is some comfort for not being a great man. These gentlemen at the Institute are all brain, as you will see; you will never come across one of them in a church. There is M. Vauquelin, always in his study when he isn't in his laboratory; I like to believe though that he thinks of God while he analyzes His works. —This is the understanding: I am to find the capital, I will put you in possession of my secret, and we will divide the profits equally, so there will be no need to draw up a deed. Good success to us both! We will tune our pipes. Off with you, my boy; I have affairs of my own to see after. One moment, Popinot; in three weeks' time I am going to give a

grand ball, have a suit of clothes made, and come to it like a merchant already in a good way of business—"

This last piece of kindness touched Popinot so much that he grasped César's large hand in his and kissed it. The good man's confidence had flattered the lover, and a man in love is capable of anything.

"Poor fellow!" said Birotteau, as he watched his assistant hurrying across the gardens of the Tuileries, "if Césarine only cared about him! But he limps, his hair is the color of a basin, and girls are such queer things! I can scarcely believe that Césarine . . . And then her mother would like to see her a notary's wife. Alexandre Crottat would make her a rich woman; money makes anything endurable, while there is no happiness that will stand the test of poverty. After all, I have made up my mind that my girl shall be mistress of herself, so that she stops short of folly."

Birotteau's next-door neighbor, Cayron by name, was a dealer in umbrellas, sunshades, and walking-sticks. He came from Languedoc, his business was not doing well, and César had helped him several times. Cayron asked nothing better than to contract his limits, and to effect a proportionate saving in house rent by giving up two first-floor rooms to the wealthy perfumer.

"Well, neighbor," said Birotteau familiarly as he entered the umbrella shop, "my wife consents to the enlargement of our place. If you like, we will go round and see M. Molineux at eleven o'clock."

"My dear M. Birotteau," returned he of the umbrella shop, "I have never asked anything for the concession on my part, but you know that a good man of business ought to turn everything to money."

"The deuce!" cried the perfumer; "I have no money to throw away, and I am waiting to know if my architect thinks the thing feasible. 'Before you settle anything,' so he said, 'we must know whether the floors are on a level; and then we must have M. Molineux's leave to make an opening in the wall, and is it a party wall?' And after that I shall have

to turn the staircase in my house, so as to alter the landing and have the whole place level from end to end. There will be a lot of expense, and I don't want to ruin myself."

"Ah, sir," cried the Languedocien, "when *you* are ruined, heaven and earth will come together and have a family."

Birotteau stroked his chin, raised himself on tiptoe, and came down again.

"Besides," Cayron went on, "I only ask you to take this paper of me—" and he held out a little statement for five thousand francs and sixteen bills.

"Ah!" said the perfumer, turning them over, "all for small amounts, at two months and three months—"

"Take them of me, and don't charge me more than six per cent," pleaded the umbrella dealer humbly.

"Am I a Jew?" asked the perfumer reproachfully.

"Goodness, sir, I took them to du Tillet that used to be your assistant, and he would not have them at any price; he wanted to know how much I would consent to lose, no doubt."

"I know none of these signatures," said the perfumer.

"Well, we have funny names in the cane and umbrella trade; they are hawkers."

"Well, well; I do not say that I will take the lot, but I might manage to take all at the shortest dates."

"Don't leave me to run after those horse-leeches that drain us of the best part of the profits, for a thousand francs at four months; take the lot, sir! I do so little discounting that no one gives me credit; that is the death of us poor retailers in a small way."

"Well, well, I will take your little bills. Célestin shall settle it with you. Be ready at eleven.—Here comes my architect, M. Grindot," added the perfumer, as he saw the young man whom he had met by appointment at M. de la Billardière's house on the previous evening.—"Unlike most men of talent, you are punctual, sir," said César, in his most genteel manner.

"If punctuality—in the phrase of a king who was a clever man as well as a great statesman—is the courtesy of kings, it is no less the fortune of architects. Time—time is money; most of all for your artists. Architecture combines all the other arts, I permit myself to say. We will not go through the shop," he added, as he showed the way to the sham carriage entrance.

Four years ago M. Grindot had taken the Grand Prix d'Architecture; and now he had just returned from a three years' sojourn in Rome at the expense of the State. While he was in Italy the young artist had thought of his art; in Paris he turned his attention to money-making. Governments alone can give the necessary millions to erect public buildings and monuments to an architect's enduring fame; and it is so natural, when fresh from Rome, to take one's self for a Fontaine or a Percier, that every ambitious young architect has a leaning toward Ministerialism; so the subsidized Liberal, metamorphosed into a Royalist, sought to find patrons in power; and when a Grand Prix conducts himself after this fashion, his comrades call him a sycophant.

Two courses lay open to the youthful architect—he might serve the perfumer or make as much as he could out of him. But Birotteau the deputy-mayor; Birotteau, the future possessor of half of that building estate near the Madeleine, where a quarter full of handsome houses was sure to be built sooner or later, was a man worth humoring, so Grindot sacrificed present gain to future opportunties. Patiently he listened to the plans, ideas, and vain repetitions of this shopkeeping Philistine, the artist's butt and laughing-stock, and the particular object of his scorn, and followed the perfumer about his house, bowing respectfully to his ideas. When Birotteau had said all that he had to say, the young architect tried to give a summary of his own views.

"You have three windows looking out upon the street in your own house," he said, "as well as the window that is wasted on the stairs and required for the landing. To these four windows you add two on the same floor in the next

house, by turning the staircase so that you can walk on level from one end to the other on the side nearest the street."

"You have understood me exactly," said the amazed perfumer.

"To carry out your plan, we shall have to light the new staircase from above, and contrive a porter's lodge in the plinth."

"Plinth?"

"Yes; the part of the wall under the—"

"I see, sir."

"As to your rooms, and their arrangements and decoration, give me *carte-blanche*. I should like to make them worthy—"

"Worthy! You have said the very word, sir."

"How long can you give me to carry out this scheme of decoration?"

"Twenty days."

"What are you prepared to put down for the workmen?"

"Well, what are the repairs likely to mount up to?"

"An architect can estimate the cost of a new building almost to a centime," said the other; "but as I have not undertaken a *bourgeois* job as yet (pardon me, sir, the word slipped out), I ought to tell you beforehand that it is impossible for me to give estimates for alterations and repairs. In a week's time I might be able to make a rough guess. Put your confidence in me; you shall have a charming staircase lighted from above, and a pretty vestibule, and in the plinth—"

"The plinth again!"

"Do not be anxious. I will find room for a little porter's lodge. The alteration and decoration of your rooms will be a labor of love. Yes, sir, I am thinking of art and not of making money. Above all things, if I am to succeed, I must be talked about, must I not? So, in my opinion, the best way is not to haggle with tradesmen, but to obtain a good effect cheaply."

"With such ideas, young man," Birotteau said patronizingly, "you will succeed."

"So you will yourself arrange with the bricklayers, painters, locksmiths, carpenters, and cabinet-makers; and I, for my part, undertake to check their accounts. You will simply agree to pay me a fee of two thousand francs; it will be money well laid out. Put the whole place into my hands by twelve o'clock to-morrow, and tell me whom you mean to employ."

"What is it likely to cost at first sight?" asked Birotteau.

"Ten to twelve thousand francs," said Grindot, "without counting the furniture; for, of course, you will refurnish the rooms. Will you give me the address of your carpet manufacturer? I ought to come to an understanding with him about the colors, so as to have a harmonious unity."

"M. Braschon in the Rue Saint-Antoine has my order," said the perfumer, assuming a ducal air.

The architect made a note of the address on one of those little tablets which are unmistakably a pretty woman's gift.

"Well," said Birotteau, "I leave it all to you, sir. Still, wait until I have arranged to take over the lease of the two rooms next door, and obtained permission to make an opening through the wall."

"Send me a note this evening," said the architect. "I must spend the night in drawing plans. We architects would rather work for a city merchant than for the King of Prussia, that is to say, as far as our own taste is concerned. In any case, I will set about taking measurements, the height of the rooms, the dimensions of the door and window embrasures, and the size of the windows."

"It must be finished by the date I have given, or it is no good."

"It certainly must," returned the architect. "The men shall work day and night, and we will employ processes for drying the paint; but do not let the builders swindle you, make them quote beforehand, and have the agreement in writing."

"Paris is the only place in the world where one can make such strokes of the wand," said Birotteau, indulging in a flourish worthy of some Asiatic potentate in the "Arabian Nights."—"Do me the honor of coming to my ball, sir. All men of talent do not feel the contempt for trade which some heap upon it; and I expect you will meet one scientific man of the highest rank—M. Vauquelin of the Institute!—besides M. de la Billardière, M. le Comte de Fontaine, M. Lebas, a judge, and President of the Tribunal of Commerce; and several magistrates, M. le Comte de Granville of the Court Royal, and M. Popinot of the Court of First Instance, M. Camusot of the Tribunal of Commerce, and his father-in law M. Cardot. . . . Perhaps, even M. le Duc de Lenoncourt, first Gentleman of the Bedchamber. It is a gathering of my friends, quite as much in honor of—er—the liberation of the soil—as to celebrate my—promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor."

Grindot's gesture was peculiar.

"Possibly—I have deserved this—signal mark of royal—favor by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch's Church on the 13th Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. These claims to—"

Constance, in morning dress, came out of Césarine's bedroom, where she had been dressing; her first glance stopped her husband's fervid eloquence; he cast about for some every-day phrase which should modestly convey the tidings of the glory awaiting him on the morrow.

"Here, *mimi*, this is M. *de* Grindot, a distinguished young man of great talent.—This gentleman is the architect whom M. de la Billardière recommended; he will superintend our little alterations here." The perfumer placed himself so that his wife could not see him, and put his finger on his lips as he uttered the word *little*. The architect understood.

"Constance, this gentleman will take the dimensions of the rooms.—Let him do it, dear," said Birotteau, and he whisked out into the street.

"Will it cost a great deal?" Constance asked the architect.

"No, madame; six thousand francs, roughly speaking—"

"Roughly speaking!" cried Mme. Birotteau. "Sir, I beg of you not to begin without an estimate, and to do nothing until a contract has been signed. I know the way of those gentlemen the builders—six thousand means twenty thousand. We are not in a position to squander money. I beg of you, sir, although my husband is certainly master in his own house, to leave him time to think this over."

"Monsieur told me, madame, that he must have the rooms finished in twenty days; if we make a delay, you may incur the expense without obtaining the result."

"There is expense and expense," said the fair mistress of the Queen of Roses.

"Eh! madame; is it so very glorious, do you think, for an architect who would like to erect public monuments to superintend alterations in a private house? I only undertook the little commission to oblige M. de la Billardière, and if you are alarmed—"

He made as if he would withdraw.

"Well, well, sir," said Constance, going back to her room. Once there, she hid her head on her daughter's shoulder.—"My child," she cried, "your father is ruining himself! He has engaged an architect who wears mustaches and a *royale* on his chin, and talks about erecting public monuments! He will fling the house out of the windows to build us a Louvre. César is always in a hurry when there is anything crazy to be done; he only told me about the plan last night, and he is setting about it this morning."

"Bah! mamma, never mind papa; Providence has always taken care of you," said Césarine, putting her arms about her mother. Then she went to the piano, to show the architect that a perfumer's daughter was no stranger to the fine arts.

When the architect came into the room, he was surprised by Césarine's beauty, and stood almost dumfounded. For the artist saw before him Césarine just come from her little

room, in her loose morning-gown, fresh and blooming with the freshness and the bloom of eighteen years, blue-eyed, and slender, and fair-haired. Youth gave the elasticity (so rare in Paris) which lends firmness to the most delicate tissues; youth tinted the blue network of veins throbbing beneath the transparent skin with the color adored by painters. For though she lived in the relaxing atmosphere of a Parisian shop, where the fresh air can scarcely penetrate, and the sunlight seldom comes, the outdoor life of Roman Trasteverine could not have been a more successful beautifier than Césarine's manner of living. Her thick hair grew erect like her father's, and being dressed high, afforded a view of a well-set neck among a shower of curls—the elaborate coiffure of the damsels of the counter, in whom a desire to shine inspires a more than English attention to trifling details in matters of the toilet.

Césarine's beauty was neither that of an English court lady nor of a French duchess, but the plump and auburn-haired comeliness of Ruben's Flemish women. She had inherited her father's turned-up nose, but its delicacy of outline gave a sprightly charm to a face, of the essentially French type so well rendered by Largillière. The rich silken tissue of the skin indicated the abundant vitality of girlhood. Her mother's broad brow was lightened by a girlish serenity, untroubled by care, and there was a tender grace in the expression of the blue liquid eyes of the happy-hearted, fair-haired maid. If happiness had taken from her face the romantic interest which painters inevitably give to their compositions by an expression somewhat too pensive, the vague, wistful instincts of the young girl who has never left her mother's wing made an approach to this ideal. With all her apparent slenderness, she was strongly made. Her feet indicated her father's peasant origin, a racial defect, like the redness of her hands—the sign-manual of a purely bourgeois descent. Sooner or later she was sure to grow stout. Occasionally young and fashionable women had come within her ken; and in course of time she had acquired from them

the instinct of dress, certain ways of carrying her head, and manners of speaking and moving, thus copied, which turned the heads of the assistants and other young men; in their eyes she seemed to have a distinguished air.

Popinot had vowed to himself that no woman but Césarine should be his wife. This mobile blonde, whom a glance seemed to read, who seemed ready to melt into tears at a harsh word, was the one woman in whose presence he could feel conscious of masculine superiority. The charming girl inspired love, without leaving time to consider whether or no she had sufficient *esprit* to insure that the love should be lasting; but what need is there for what we in Paris call *esprit*, in a class where the essential elements of happiness are good sense and virtue?

In character, Césarine was a second edition of her mother, slightly improved by an education which had taught her superfluous accomplishments. She was fond of music, and had made a crayon drawing of the "Madonna of the Chair"; she perused the works of Mesdames Cottin and Riccoboni, and the writings of Fénelon, Racine, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. She never appeared at her mother's side at the cash-desk save for a few moments before dinner, or when, on rare occasions, she took her place. Her father and mother, like all self-made people, who hasten to plant the seeds of ingratitude in their children by putting the younger generation on a higher level, delighted to make an idol of Césarine, who, happily, possessed the good qualities of her class, and did not take advantage of their weakness.

Mme. Birotteau followed the architect's movements with earnest, anxious eyes; looking on in consternation, calling her daughter's attention to the strange gyrations of the footrule, as Grindot took his measurements after the manner of architects and builders. For her, each one of those strokes of the wand seemed to lay the place under an evil enchantment, and boded ill to the house; she would fain have had the walls less lofty and the rooms smaller, and

dared not put any questions to the young man as to the results of this sorcery.

"Be easy, madame," he said, with a smile; "I shall not carry anything away."

Césarine could not help laughing.

"Sir," pleaded Constance, who did not so much as notice the architect's quip, "aim at economy; some day we may be able to make you a return—"

Before César went to M. Molineux, the landlord of the next house, he asked Roguin for the transfer of the lease which Alexandre Crottat was to have drawn up. As he came away from the notary's house, he saw du Tillet at Roguin's study window. Although the *liaison* between his sometime assistant and Mme. Roguin was a sufficient explanation of du Tillet's presence in the house at a time when the negotiations for the building land were impending, Birotteau, trustful though he was, felt uncomfortable. Du Tillet's animated face suggested that a discussion was going on.

"Suppose that he should be in the business?" he asked himself, in an access of his commercial prudence.

The suspicion flashed like lightning across his mind. He turned again and saw Mme. Roguin at the window; and then the banker's presence no longer looked so suspicious.

"Still, how if Constance was right?" he asked himself. "How stupid I am to pay any attention to a woman's notions! However, I will talk it over this morning with our uncle. It is only a step from the Cour Batave, where M. Molineux lives, to the Rue des Bourdonnais."

A suspicious onlooker, a man of business with some experience of rogues, would have been warned; but Birotteau's previous career, together with his lack of mental grasp (for he was but little fitted for retracing a chain of inductions, a process by which an able man arrives at a cause), all led to his ruin. He found the umbrella dealer dressed in his best, and was starting away with him to the

landlord, when Virginie, the servant, caught her master by the arm.

"The mistress hopes you will not go out again, sir—"

"Come!" cried Birotteau; "some more women's notions!"

"Without taking your cup of coffee. It is ready for you."

"Oh! all right. I have so many things in my head, neighbor," said Birotteau, turning to Cayron, "that I do not listen to my stomach. Be so good as to walk on; we shall meet each other at M. Molineux's door, unless you go up and explain the matter to him first. We should save time that way."

M. Molineux was an eccentric person of independent means, a specimen of a kind of humanity which you will no more find out of Paris than you will find Iceland moss growing anywhere out of Iceland. The comparison is but so much the more apt, for that the man in question belonged to that doubtful borderland between the animal and vegetable kingdoms which awaits the Mercier, who shall classify the various *cryptogamia* which strike root, thrive, or die among the plaster walls of the strange unwholesome old houses affected by the species.

This particular human plant was an umbellifer, to judge by the blue tubular cap which crowned a stem sheathed in a pair of greenish-colored breeches, and terminated by bulbous roots enveloped in list slippers. At first sight the plant seems harmless and colorless enough; there is certainly nothing to suggest poison in its appearance. In this strange freak of nature you would have recognized the typical shareholder, who believes in all the news which the daily press baptizes with printer's ink, whose "Look at the paper" is a final appeal to authority; this (you would have thought) was the bourgeois, essentially a lover of order, always (in theory) in rebellion against the powers that be, to whom in practice he punctually yields obedience; a ferocious creature, take him singly, who grows tame in a crowd of his like. The man who is obdurate as

a bailiff where his dues are concerned, gives fresh groundsel to his birds, and saves the fishbones for the cat; he looks up in the middle of making out a receipt to whistle to the canary; he is suspicious as a turnkey, but will hurry to invest his money in some doubtful undertaking, and then try to recover his losses by the most sordid meanness. The noxious qualities of this hybrid growth are only discovered by use; its nauseous bitterness requires the coction of some piece of business wherein its interests are mingled with those of men.

Like all Parisians, Molineux felt a need to make his power felt. He craved that particular privilege of a sovereignty more or less exercised by every creature, down to the very porter, over a larger or smaller number of victims—a woman, a child, a clerk, or lodger, a horse, a dog, or monkey—that part of domination which consists in handing on to another the mortifications received by an aspirant to higher spheres. The tiresome little old person in question, having neither wife, nor child, nor niece, nor nephew, treated his charwoman so harshly that she gave him no opportunity of venting his spleen upon her, and avoided all collision with him by a rigorous discharge of her duties.

So his appetite for domestic tyranny being thus balked, he was fain to find other ways of satisfying it. He had made a patient study of the law of landlord and tenant, and of the legal aspects of the party-wall; he had fathomed the mysteries of jurisprudence with regard to house-property in Paris, and was learned in its infinitely minute intricacies with regard to boundaries and abutments, easements, rates, charges, regulations for the cleansing of the street, hangings for Fête-Dieu processions, waste-pipes, lights, projections over the public way, and the near proximity of unsanitary dwellings. All his mental and physical energies, all his intelligence was devoted to maintaining his authority as a landlord with a high hand; he had made a hobby of his occupation, and the hobby was becoming a mania.

He loved to protect citizens against encroachments on

their rights, but opportunities occurred so seldom that his thwarted passion expended itself upon his tenants. A tenant became his enemy, his inferior, his subject, his vassal. He felt that their homage was a due, and regarded those who passed him without a salutation on the stairs as boors. He made out his receipts himself, and sent them at noon on the quarter day; and those who were behindhand received a summons by a certain hour. Then followed a distraint and costs, and all the cavalry of the law came into the field with the celerity of "the machine," as the headsman calls his instrument of execution. Molineux gave no grace and no delay; his heart was indurated on the side of rents.

"I will lend you the money if you want it," he would say to a solvent tenant, "but pay me my rent; any getting behindhand with the rent means a loss of interest for which the law provides no remedy."

After a prolonged study of the skittish humors of successive tenants who conformed to no standard and, like successive dynasties, nor more nor less, invariably overturned the institutions of their predecessors, Molineux had promulgated a charter, which he observed religiously. By virtue of it, the good man never did any repairs; none of his chimneys smoked, his staircases were always in order, his ceilings white, his cornices above reproach, his floors held securely to the joists, and there was no fault to find with the paint. All the locks had been put in within the last three years, every window pane was whole, and as for cracks in the walls, they did not exist; he could see no broken tiles in the floors till the tenants were leaving the house. He usually appeared upon the scene to receive the incoming tenants with a locksmith and a painter and glazier, very handy fellows, he said. The tenant was doubtless at liberty to make improvements; but if the thriftless creature redecorated his rooms, old Molineux set his wits to work, and pondered night and day how to dislodge him and let the newly papered and painted abode to another comer. He set his snares, bided his time, and began the whole series of his unhallowed devices. There

was no subtlety in the regulations of Paris with regard to leases that he did not know. He indited polite and amiable communications to his victims; but beneath the manner, as beneath the harmless and obliging expression of the pettifogging scribbler himself, lurked the spirit of a Shylock.

He must always be paid six months in advance, to be deducted from the last half-year's rent, subject to a host of thorny conditions of his own invention. He assured himself that the value of the tenant's furniture was sufficient to cover the rent, and reconnoitred every new tenant like a detective when he came in. There were some occupations which he did not like, and the least sound of a hammer frightened him. When the time came for handing over a lease, he kept it back for a week, conning it over for fear it should contain what he denominated *notary's et ceteras*.

Apart from his character of landlord, Jean-Baptiste Molineux was apparently good-natured and obliging. He could play a game of boston without complaining of being badly seconded by his partner; his stock subjects for conversation were of the ordinary bourgeois kind, and he found the same things laughable—the arbitrary acts of bakers (the rascals), who give short weights, which are winked at by the police, the heroic seventeen deputies of the Left. He read the Curé Meslier's "Bon Sens," yet went to mass, halting between Deism and Christianity; but he subscribed nothing for sacramental bread, under the plea that you must resist the encroachments of the priesthood. The indefatigable redresser of grievances would write to this effect to the newspapers, though the newspapers neither inserted his letters nor replied to them. Molineux was, in short, in many respects the ordinary estimable citizen who burns a yule log at Christmas, draws for king on Twelfth Night, plays tricks on the 1st of April, makes the round of the boulevards when the weather is fine, goes to watch the skating; and on days when there are to be fireworks in the Place Louis XV., will take his place there at two o'clock in the afternoon with a piece of bread in his pocket, so as to be "in the front row."

The Cour Batave, where the little old man lived, is a result of one of those freaks of the speculative builder which cannot be explained after they have taken substantial form. It is a cloister-like building with its freestone arcading, its covered galleries surrounding the court with a fountain in the middle—a thirsty fountain with its lion jaws agape, not to supply, but to ask for water of every passer-by. Possibly it was intended for a sort of Palais-Royal to adorn the Faubourg Saint-Denis. There is a little light and stir of life during the day in the unwholesome pile shut in on all four sides by tall houses; it lies in the centre of a labyrinth of dank alleys, where the rheumatism lurks for the hurrying foot-passenger, a maze of dark narrow passages which converge here and connect the Quartier des Halles and the Quartier Saint-Martin by the famous Rue Quincampoix; but at night there is no spot in Paris more deserted, and these little slums might be called the catacombs of commerce. It is the sink of several industries; and if there are few natives of Batavia proper, there are plenty of small tradesmen.

Naturally, all the suites of rooms in this merchant's palace have but one outlook—into the central courtyard—and for this and other reasons the rents asked are of the lowest. M. Molineux inhabited one of the angles of the building. Considerations of health had prompted the choice of a sixth floor lodging; for fresh air was only to be had at a height of seventy feet from the ground. From the leads, where the worthy owner of house-property was wont to take exercise, he enjoyed a charming view of the windmills of Montmartre. He grew flowers up there, too, in defiance of police regulations against these hanging-gardens of the modern Babylon. His sixth-floor establishment consisted of four rooms, without counting the water-closets on the floor above, a valuable property to which his claim was incontestable; he had the key, he had established them. On a first entrance, an indecent bareness at once revealed the miserly nature of the man. Half a dozen straw-bottomed chairs stood in the

lobby; there was a glazed earthenware stove; and on the walls, covered with a bottle-green paper, hung four prints bought at sales. In the dining-room you beheld a couple of sideboards, two cages full of birds, a table covered with oilcloth, a weather-glass, mahogany chairs with horsehair cushions, and through a French window a view of the aforesaid hanging-gardens. Short, antiquated green silk curtains adorned the sitting-room, and the white-painted wooden furniture was upholstered in green Utrecht velvet. As for the furniture of the old bachelor's room, it was of the period of Louis XV.; disfigured by prolonged wear, and so dirty that a woman in a white gown would have shrunk from contact with it. The chimney-piece boasted a clock; the dial, between two columns, served as a pediment beneath a statuette of Pallas brandishing a lance—a fabulous personage of antiquity. The tiled floor was so littered over with plates full of scraps for the cats that it was scarcely possible to move about without setting a foot in one of them. Above the rosewood chest of drawers hung a pastel—Molineux in his youth. Add a few books, tables covered with shabby green cardboard boxes, a case full of the stuffed forms of some departed canaries on a console table, and, to complete the list, a bed so chilly-looking that it might have been a rebuke to a Carmelite.

César Birotteau was charmed with Molineux's exquisite politeness. He found the latter in his gray flannel dressing-gown, keeping an eye on the milk set on a little cast-iron plate warmer, in a corner of the hearth, while he poured the contents of a brown earthen pipkin, in which he had been boiling coffee grounds, into his *cafétière* by spoonfuls at a time. The umbrella dealer had opened the door, lest his landlord should be disturbed in this occupation; but Molineux, holding mayors and deputy-mayors ("our municipal officers," as he called them) in great veneration, rose at first sight of the magistrate, and stood cap in hand until the great Birotteau should be seated.

"No, sir . . . Yes, sir . . . Ah, sir, if I had known that

I was to have the honor of housing a member of the municipal government of Paris amid my humble Penates, pray believe that I should have made it my business to repair to your house; although I am your landlord, or—on the point —of—being—"

Here Birotteau by a gesture entreated him to put on his cap.

"I shall do nothing of the kind; I shall remain bareheaded until you are seated, and have put on your hat if you have a cold. My room is rather chilly; my narrow means do not permit—God bless you, Mr. Deputy-mayor!"

Birotteau had sneezed while fumbling for his papers. He held them out, not without remarking that to save any delay he had had them made out at his own expense by M. Roguin his notary.

"I do not call M. Roguin's knowledge in question; 'tis an old name, well known in the Parisian notariat; but I have my little ways of doing things, and I look after my affairs myself, a hobby excusable enough; and my notary is—"

"But this is such a simple matter," said the perfumer, accustomed to prompt decisions on the part of buyers and sellers.

"*Simple!*" echoed Molineux. "Nothing is simple where house property is concerned. Ah! you are not a landlord, sir; so much the happier you! If you but knew the lengths to which a tenant will push ingratitude and what precautions we have to take! Now just listen to this, sir; I have a tenant—" and for fifteen minutes Molineux held forth, relating how that M. Gendrin, a draughtsman, had eluded the vigilance of the caretaker in the Rue Saint-Honoré. M. Gendrin had perpetrated scandals worthy of a Marat, obscene drawings! and the police tolerated it, nay, they were made with the connivance of the police! Then this Gendrin, an artist of thoroughly immoral character, had gone back to the house with loose women, and made it impossible to go up and down the stairs, a prank worthy of a man who drew caricatures to ridicule the Government. And why all these

misdeeds? . . . Because he was asked to pay his rent on the 15th! Gendrin and Molineux were about to go to law about it; for while the artist did not pay, he insisted on occupying the empty rooms. Molineux received anonymous letters—from Gendrin no doubt—threatening to murder him some night in the alleys about the Cour Batave.

"Things have arrived at such a pitch, sir," he went on, "that the Prefect of Police, to whom in confidence I related my difficulty (at the same time, I took the opportunity of saying a word or two touching the alterations that ought to be made in the provisions of the law for such cases), gave me an authorization to carry firearms in self-defence."

The little old man got up to look for his pistols.

"Here they are, sir!" cried he.

"But you have nothing of that kind to fear from me, sir," said Birotteau, glancing at Cayron with a smile that plainly expressed his pity for such a man.

Molineux caught the glance, and was shocked to see such a look on the countenance of a "municipal officer," whose duty it was to see to the safety of those in his district. He could have forgiven it in anybody else, but in Birotteau it was unpardonable.

"Sir," Molineux answered dryly, "one of the most highly respected judges in the Consular Tribune, a deputy-mayor, and an honorable merchant, would not condescend to such baseness, for baseness it is! But in this particular case you want the consent of your landlord, M. le Comte de Granville, before you make a hole in the wall, and stipulations must be made in the agreement touching the restoration of the wall on the expiration of the lease. As a matter of fact, too, the rent is a great deal lower than it will be; rents will go up all about the Place Vendome; they are going up already! The Rue Castiglione is about to be built. I am binding myself down—I am binding—myself—"

"Let us have done with it," said Birotteau. "What do you want? I have had enough experience of business to guess that your reasonings can be silenced by

the great argument—money! Well, how much do you want?"

"Nothing but what is fair, sir. How long has your lease to run?"

"Seven years," answered Birotteau.

"What may not my first floor be worth in seven years' time?" cried Molineux. "What will two furnished rooms let for over in your quarter? More than two hundred francs a month very likely! I am binding myself; binding myself down by a lease. So we will set down the rent at fifteen hundred francs. At that figure I will consent to receive you as a tenant for the two rooms instead of M. Cayron here," giving the dealer a sly wink, "and let you have them on lease for seven consecutive years. The opening in the wall you will make at your own charges, subject to your bringing to me proof that M. le Comte de Granville sanctions it and waives all his rights in the matter. Whatever happens in consequence of the small opening, the responsibility will rest upon you; but you shall be in nowise bound to reinstate the wall so far as I am concerned; you shall pay me down five hundred francs now instead; we never can tell what may happen; and I don't want to run about after anybody to put up my wall again for me."

"The conditions seem to me scarcely fair," put in Birotteau.

"Then you must pay me down seven hundred and fifty francs *hic et nunc*, to be carried forward till the last six months of possession; the lease will be a sufficient discharge. Oh! I will take bills of exchange for value received in rent, at any date you please, so that I have my guarantee. I am a plain-dealing man, and go straight to the point in business. We will stipulate that you shall wall up the door on my staircase, where you have no right of way . . . at your own expense . . . in brick and mortar. Reassure yourself, I shall not call upon you to make it good when the lease expires; I shall regard the five hundred francs as an indemnity. You will always find me reasonable, sir."

"We in business are not so particular," said the perfumer; "if we had all these formalities, we should do no business at all."

"Oh, in business, that is quite another thing, especially in the perfumery line, where everything slips off and on like a glove," said the little old man, with a sour smile. "But with house property in Paris, sir, you cannot be too particular. Why, I had a tenant in the Rue Montorgueil—"

"I should be very sorry to delay your breakfast, sir," said Birotteau; "here are the deeds, set them right, all that you ask me is agreed to; let us sign the documents to-morrow, and give our promises by word of mouth to-day, for to-morrow my architect must be put in possession of the place."

Molineux looked again at the umbrella-dealer. "There is part of the term expired, sir; M. Cayron has no mind to pay for it; we will add the amount to the little bills, so that the agreement will run from January to January. That will be more business-like."

"So be it," said Birotteau.

"There is the halfpenny in the shilling for the porter—"

"Why, you are not allowing me to use the staircase and the doorway; it is not right that—"

"Oh! but you are a tenant!" cried little Molineux in peremptory tones, up in arms for the principle involved. "You must pay door and window taxes and your share of the rates. If once we clearly understand each other, sir, there will be no difficulties hereafter.—Is your business rapidly increasing, sir; are you doing well?"

"Yes," said Birotteau, "but that is not my reason. I am inviting a few of my friends, partly to celebrate the evacuation of the foreign troops, partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor—"

"Aha!" said Molineux, "a well-deserved honor."

"Yes," said Birotteau. "It may be that I have shown myself not unworthy of this signal mark of royal favor by acting in my capacity at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th

of Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon; these claims—"

"Equal those of our heroes in the late army. The ribbon is red, because it has been dyed in blood shed for France."

At these words, a quotation from the "Constitutionnel," Birotteau could not resist the impulse to invite little Molineux, who grew quite incoherent in his thanks, and was almost ready to forgive the slight which had been put upon him. The old man went as far as the stair-head with his new tenant, overwhelming him with civilities.

As soon as they were outside in the Cour Batave, Birotteau looked at Cayron with an amused expression.

"I did not think that there was such a weak-minded creature in existence," he said; "idiot" had been on the tip of his tongue, but he suppressed it in time.

"Ah, sir!" said Cayron, "everybody is not as clever as you are."

Birotteau might be excused for thinking himself a clever man compared with Molineux; the umbrella-dealer's reply drew a pleasant smile from him; he took leave of his companion with a regal air.

"Here am I at the Market," he said to himself; "let us arrange about the hazel-nuts."

After an hour spent in making inquiries, the market-woman referred Birotteau to the Rue des Lombards, the headquarters of the trade in nuts for confectionery, and there his friends the Matifats informed him that the only wholesale dealer in hazel-nuts was one Mme. Angélique Madou, resident in the Rue Perrin-Gasselin: and that this was the one house in the trade for genuine Provençal filberts and white Alpine hazel-nuts.

The Rue Perrin-Gasselin lies in a quadrangle bounded by the Quay, the Rue Saint-Denis, the Rue de la Ferronnerie, and the Rue de la Monnaie, a labyrinth of slums which are, as it were, the entrails of Paris. Here countless numbers of heterogeneous and nondescript industries are carried on; evil-smelling trades, and the manufacture of the daintiest

finery, herrings and lawn, silk and honey, butter and tulle, jostle each other in its squalid precincts. Here are the headquarters of those multitudinous small trades which Paris no more suspects in its midst than a man surmises the functions performed by the pancreas in the human economy. In this congested district, in which one Bidault of the Rue Grenétat (otherwise known as Gigonnet the pawnbroker) played the part of leech, the whole stock of goods sold in the Great Market is kept. The ancient mews are warehouses where tons of oil are stored; the old coach-houses hold thousands of pairs of cotton stockings.

Mme. Madou, sometime a fish-wife, had gone into the "dry-fruit line" some ten years before this present year of grace, on her entrance into a partnership with the late owner of the business, who had an old-established connection among the ladies of the Great Market. Her beauty, of a vigorous and provocative order, had disappeared in excessive stoutness. She lived on the ground floor of a yellow dilapidated house, held together by iron cramps at every story. The departed dealer in dry fruit had succeeded in ridding himself of competitors, and had secured a monopoly of the trade; so that, in spite of some slight defects of education, his successor could continue in the same groove, and came and went in her warehouses, old out-buildings, stables, and workshops, where she waged war against insect life with some success.

Mme. Angélique Madou dispensed with counting-house, safe, and book-keeping (for she could neither read nor write), and answered a letter by blows of the fist, for she looked upon it as an insult. In other respects she was a good-natured soul, with a high-colored countenance, and a bandanna handkerchief tied about her head beneath her cap, and a trumpet voice which won the respect of the carmen who brought goods to the Rue Perrin-Gasselin, and whose "rows" with her usually ended in a bottle of *petit blanc*. She could not well have any trouble with the growers who supplied her, for she always paid cash on delivery, the only way of

carrying on such a business as hers, and Mother Madou went into the country to see them in the summer-time.

Birotteau found this shrewish saleswoman among her sacks of hazel-nuts, chestnuts, and walnuts.

"Good day, my dear lady," said Birotteau flippantly.

"*Your dear!*" returned she. "So you have pleasant recollections of your dealings with me, have you? Have we met each other at Court?"

"I am a perfumer, and what is more, deputy-mayor of the Second Arrondissement of Paris, and I have a right to expect a different tone from you."

"I marry when I have a mind," said the virago; "I am no customer at the mayor's office, and don't trouble deputy-mayors much. And as for my customers, they adore me, and I talk to 'em as I please. If they don't like it, they may take themselves somewhere else."

"See what comes of a monopoly," muttered Birotteau.

"Popole? that's my godson; he has been up to some foolery perhaps; have you come for him, your worship?" she asked, in milder tones.

"No. I have the honor to inform you that I come to you as a customer."

"All right. What is your name, my lad? I haven't seen you here before."

"If that is the way you talk, you ought to sell your nuts cheap," said Birotteau, and he mentioned his name and designation.

"Oh! you are the famous Birotteau with the handsome wife. Well, and what weight do you want of these little dears of hazel-nuts, honey?"

"Six thousand pounds' weight."

"It is as much as I have," said the saleswoman, with a voice like a cracked flute. "You are not in the do-nothing line, marrying the girls, and making scent for them. Lord, bless you! you do a trade, you do! Sorry I have so little for you! You will be a fine customer, and your name will be written on the heart of the woman that I love best in the world—"

"Who may that be?"

"Who but dear Madame Madou."

"What do you want for the nuts?"

"Twenty-five francs the hundred-weight to you, mister, if you take the lot."

"Twenty-five francs," said Birotteau. "That is fifteen hundred francs! And I shall very likely take a hundred thousand pounds' weight in a year!"

"But just look at the quality; no husks!" cried she, plunging a red arm into a sack of filberts. "Sound kernels, my dear sir. Just think, now, the grocers sell their mixed dessert fruits at twenty-four sous the pound, and in every four pounds they put more than a pound of hazel-nuts. Am I to lose money on the goods to please you? You are a nice man, but I don't care enough about you yet to do that. As you are taking such a quantity, we might let you have them at twenty francs, for it won't do to send away a deputy-mayor; it would bring bad luck to the young couples! A good article; just feel the weight of them! They wouldn't go fifty to the pound! Sound nuts they are, not a maggot among them!"

"Well, send six thousand pounds' weight early to-morrow morning to my factory in the Rue Faubourg-du-Temple, for two thousand francs at ninety days."

"They shall be punctual as a bride at a wedding. Well, good-by, M. le Maire; we part good friends. But if it is all the same to you," she added, following Birotteau into the court, "I would rather have a bill at forty days, for I have let you have them too cheap, and I can't afford to lose the interest on the money too. For all his sentimental ways, old Gigonnet sucks the life out of us, as a spider sucks a fly."

"Very well, yes, fifty days. But I'll have the nuts by weight, so as not to lose on the hollow ones. They must be weighed or I'll have nothing to do with them."

"Oh, the fox; he knows that dodge, does he?" said Mme. Madou; "you can't catch him napping. Those beggars in

the Rue des Lombards put him up to that! Those great wolves yonder are all in a league to devour us poor lambs."

The lamb was five feet high and three feet round; she had not a vestige of a waist, and looked like a post in a striped cotton gown.

As he went along the Rue Saint-Honoré, the perfumer, lost in his schemes, meditated on his duel with Macassar Oil. He designed the labels, decided on the shape of the bottles, the quality of the corks, the color of the placards. And people say that there is no poetry in business! Newton did not make more calculations over the discovery of the famous binomial theorem than Birotteau made for the "Comagen Essence" (for it was an essence now; the words oil and essence possessed no definite meaning for him, and he went from the one to the other). All these combinations were seething in his head, and he mistook the ferment of an empty brain for the germination of an idea. So absorbed was he in his meditations, that he went past the Rue des Bourdonnais, and bethinking himself of his uncle, was obliged to retrace his steps.

Claude-Joseph Pillerault, formerly a retail ironmonger at the sign of the Golden Bell, was one of those human beings whose exterior is the outward and visible expression of a beautiful nature; and heart and brain, language and thought, his manner and the clothes that he wore, were all in harmony. He was the only relation that Mme. Birotteau had in the world, and upon her and on Césarine Pillerault had centred all his affections; for in the course of his business career he had lost his wife and his son, and a boy whom he had adopted, the son of his cook.

These cruel bereavements had given to the good man's thoughts a cast of Christian stoicism, a lofty doctrine which was the informing spirit of his life, and shed the radiance of a winter sunset over his last years, a glow that brings no warmth. There was a tinge of asceticism about the thin, worn face, where sallow and swarthy tones were harmoniously

blended; you saw in it a striking resemblance to typical presentments of Time; but the every-day cares of a retail business had touched this face, there was less of the monumental quality, less of the grimness insisted upon by painters, sculptors, and designers of bronze figures for clocks.

Pillerault was of middle height, and thick-set rather than stout. Nature had fashioned him for hard work and a long life; he was strongly built, as his square shoulders indicated; a man of phlegmatic temper, whose feelings, though he could feel, did not lie on the surface. His quiet manner and resolute face indicated that he was little given to the expression of his emotions; but reserved and undemonstrative though he was, there were depths of tenderness in Pillerault's nature. The principal characteristic of the hazel eyes, with dark specks in them, was their unvarying clearness. There were deep furrows in a forehead sallowed by time, narrow, contracted, and stern, and covered with gray hair, cut so short that it looked like felt. Prudence, not avarice, was expressed in the lines of the thin lips. The brightness of the eyes told of a temperate life; and, indeed, sincerity, a sense of duty, and a real humility glorified his features and set off his face, as health does.

For sixty years he had led a hard and dreary existence, a constant struggle for a livelihood. It was the same story as César's own, with César's luck omitted. Pillerault had remained an assistant till he was thirty years old; he had embarked his capital in business at an age when César was investing his savings in *rentes;* then the law of the maximum had hit him hard, and his pick-axes and spades had been requisitioned. His taciturn wisdom, his foresight, and logical clear-headedness had had their effect on his "ways of doing business." His bargains were concluded as a rule by word of mouth, and difficulties seldom arose. Like most meditative people, he was an observer; he said little, and studied those who talked; often he had declined good bargains of which his neighbors had availed themselves, and subsequently repented, and vowed that Pillerault could smell out

a rogue. He preferred sure gains, if of the smallest, to bold strokes of business involving heavy sums.

His stock of hardware consisted of grates, gridirons, cast-iron fire-dogs, boilers, and copper caldrons, hoes, and such agricultural implements as laborers use, somewhat unremunerative branches of a business that involves continual drudgery. Hardware is ponderous, awkward to handle, and difficult to store, and the profits are not heavy in proportion; so Pillerault had nailed up many a case, sent off many packages, and unloaded many vans. Never had a competence been more honorably earned, more thoroughly deserved, more to the credit of the man who had made it. He had never asked too much, had never run after business. Toward the end of the time, you might have seen him smoking his pipe in the doorway and watching his assistants at work. In 1814, when he retired, his actual capital at first consisted of seventy thousand francs, which he invested in Government stock, that brought him in five thousand and some odd hundred francs a year, with a further forty thousand francs due in five years' time, when the assistant to whom he had sold the business was to pay for it. On this amount, meanwhile, no interest was paid. For thirty years he had annually made seven per cent on a turn-over of a hundred thousand francs, and had lived on half his income. Such was his balance-sheet.

His neighbors, but little jealous of this by no means brilliant success, extolled his wisdom without comprehending it.

At the corner of the Rue de la Monnaie and the Rue Saint-Honoré stands the Café David, where a few retired tradesmen, such as Pillerault, congregate of an evening to take their coffee. At one time, Pillerault's adoption of his cook's son had occasioned a few jokes among its frequenters, such jokes as are addressed to a man looked up to among his fellows, for the ironmonger received a respect for which he had not sought; his own self-respect sufficed him. So when Pillerault lost the poor young fellow, there were more than two hundred people at the funeral who followed his adopted child

to the grave. He behaved heroically in those days, making no parade of his grief, bearing it as a brave man bears sorrow. This increased the sympathy felt in the quarter for the "good man," as they called him, and the accent in which the words were spoken gave the words a wider and ennobled meaning when they were applied to Pillerault.

Claude Pillerault had become so accustomed to the sober even tenor of his life, that when he retired from business and entered upon the time of leisure, which hangs so heavily on many a Parisian tradesman's hands, he could not unbend and divert himself with the amusements of an idle life; he made no change in his housekeeping; and his old age was enlivened by his political opinions, which, let us admit it at once, were those of the extreme Left.

Pillerault belonged to the artisan class, which the Revolution had brought into co-operation with the small shopkeepers. The one blot on his character was the importance which he attached to the victory of his principles; he dwelt fondly on his rights, on liberty, on the great results of the Revolution; he firmly believed that his political freedom and existence were being undermined by the Jesuits, whose underhand power the Liberals discovered, and threatened by the ideas with which the "Constitutionnel" credited Monsieur the King's brother. He was, however, consistent in his life and in his ideas; there was nothing narrow in his political views; he never abused his adversaries, he held courtiers in suspicion, and believed in Republican virtues. He imagined that Manuel was guiltless of any excesses, that General Foy was a great man, and Casimir Périer without ambition; to his thinking, Lafayette was a political prophet, Courier a good man. In short, he beheld noble chimerical visions.

The good man was domestic in his habits; he made part of the family circle in which his niece lived—the Ragons, Judge Popinot, Joseph Lebas, and the Matifats. Fifteen hundred francs a year supplied his needs; the rest of his income was spent in charitable deeds and in presents to his grandniece; four times a year he gave a dinner to his friends

at Roland's in the Rue du Hasard, and took them afterward to the play. He played the part of the old bachelor friend on whom married women draw bills at sight for their fancies; for a country excursion, a party for the Opéra or the Montagnes-Beaujon; and Pillerault would be very happy at such times in the pleasure which he was giving, and felt the gladness in other hearts.

If Molineux's character was written at large in his queer furniture, Pillerault's pure heart and simple life were no less revealed by his surroundings. His abode consisted of a lobby, a sitting-room, and bedroom. But for the difference in size, it might have been a Carthusian's cell. The lobby, floored with red tiles, which were beeswaxed, boasted but one window, hung with dimity curtains edged with scarlet; mahogany chairs with red leather cushions, and studded with brass nails, stood against the wall, which was covered with an olive-green paper, and adorned with pictures—a "Declaration of Independence," a portrait of Bonaparte as First Consul, and a "Battle of Austerlitz." The furniture of the sitting-room, doubtless left to the upholsterer, was yellow, and covered with a flowered pattern; there was a carpet on the floor; the bronze ornaments on the chimney-piece were not gilded. There was a painted fire-screen before the grate; a vase of artificial flowers under a glass shade stood on a console, and a liqueur stand on a round table covered with a cloth. It was evident from the unused look of the room that it was a concession to convention on the part of the retired ironmonger, who rarely received visitors.

His own room was as bare as that of a monk or an old soldier, the two men who make the truest estimate of life. In the alcove a holy-water stoup caught the eye, a profoundly touching confession of faith in a Republican stoic.

An old woman came in to do the work of the establishment; but so great was Pillerault's reverence for womankind that he would not allow her to clean his shoes, and made an arrangement with a shoeblack.

His costume was plain, and never varied. He always wore

a coat and breeches of blue cloth, a cotton waistcoat, a white cravat, and very low walking-shoes; and on high days and holidays a coat with metal buttons. He rose, breakfasted, went out, dined, and returned home when the evening was over with the strictest regularity, for a methodical life conduces to health and length of days. César, the Ragons, and the Abbé Loraux always avoided the subject of politics; those of his own circle knew better than to court attack by trying to convert him. Like his nephew and the Ragons, he put great faith in Roguin; for him a notary of Paris was always a being to be venerated, and probity incarnate. In the matter of the building land, Pillerault had examined it so thoroughly, that the remembrance of his investigations had given César moral support in the combat with his wife's forebodings.

As César climbed the seventy-two steps of the stairs which led to the low brown doorway of his uncle's rooms, he thought within himself that the old man must be very hale to go up and down them daily without a murmur. He found the coat and breeches hanging on a peg outside, and Mme. Vaillant busy rubbing and brushing them; while the philosopher himself, in his gray flannel dressing-gown, was breakfasting by the fireside, and conning the reports of parliamentary debates in the "Constitutionnel" or the "Journal du Commerce."

"The affair is settled, uncle," said César; "they are just about to draft the documents; but if you have any doubts or regret about it, there is still time to cry off."

"Why should I cry off? It is a good piece of business, but it takes some time to realize, like everything that is safe. My fifty thousand francs are lying at the bank; the last instalment of five thousand francs for my business was paid in yesterday. As for the Ragons, they are putting all that they have into it."

"Why, how do they live?"

"Never mind; they live, at all events."

"I understand you, uncle," said Birotteau, deeply touched, and he grasped the austere old man's hands tightly in his.

"What are you going to do about this business?" Pillerault asked abruptly.

"I shall take three-eighths; you and the Ragons will take an eighth between you; I shall credit you with the amount in my books until they decide the question of the deeds."

"Good! Are you so very rich, my boy, that you pay down three hundred thousand francs? It looks to me as though you were risking a good deal of money outside your business; won't the business suffer? After all, it is your own affair. If you are pulled up, here are the funds at ninety; I could sell out two thousand francs in consols. Take care, though, my boy; if you come to me, you will be laying hands on your girl's fortune."

"Uncle, you say the kindest things as if they were a matter of course; it goes to my heart to hear you."

"General Foy touched me after another fashion just now! There, at all events, it is settled. The building lots won't fly away; we shall have them for half their value; and even if we should have to wait six years, there will still be something in the way of interest; timberyards would pay rent, so we cannot lose. There is only one thing, and that is impossible—Roguin will not run away with our capital—"

"But that is what my wife said last night; she is afraid—"

"That Roguin will run off with our money," said Pillerault, laughing; "and why?"

"Well, she says she doesn't like the cut of his features; and, like all men who cannot have women, he is frantic for—"

An incredulous smile stole over Pillerault's face; he tore a leaf out of a little book, filled in the amount, and signed his name.

"Here, this is an order on the bank for a hundred thousand francs, for Ragon's share and mine. Those poor people, though, to make up the money, sold out their fifteen shares in the Wortschin mines to your worthless rogue of a du Tillet. Good people in sore straits; it goes to one's heart to see it. And such good people they are, such noble peo-

ple, the flower of the old-fashioned bourgeoisie, in fact! Their brother Popinot, the judge, knows nothing about it; they are hiding their affairs from him, lest they should hinder him from giving free course to his benevolence. People who have worked as I did for thirty years—"

"God grant that the Comagen Oil succeeds!" cried Birotteau, "and I shall be doubly pleased. Good-day, uncle; you are coming to dine with us on Sunday with the Ragons and Roguin, and M. Claparon is coming, for we are all going to sign the papers the day after to morrow; to-morrow will be Friday, and I don't want to do bus—"

"Do you really believe in those superstitions?"

"I shall never believe that the day when the Son of God was put to death by men can be a lucky day, uncle. Why? —people stop all business even on the 21st of January."

"Good-by till Sunday," said Pillerault abruptly.

"If it weren't for his political opinions," said Birotteau to himself, as he went downstairs again, "I do not know where they would find his equal here below. What are politics to him? He would get on very nicely without thinking of them at all. His infatuation shows that no one is perfect.—Three o'clock already!" said César, as he entered his shop.

"Are you going to take these bills, sir?" asked Célestin, holding out the umbrella-dealer's collection of bills.

"Yes, at six per cent, no commission.—Wife, put out all my things ready for me; I am going to call on M. Vauquelin, you know why. Above all things, a white cravat."

Birotteau gave some orders to his assistants; he did not see Popinot, guessed that his future partner had gone to dress for the visit, and went up at once to his own room, where the Dresden Madonna met his eyes in a magnificent frame, according to his orders.

"Well, it looks fine, doesn't it?"

"Why, papa, say it is beautiful, or people will laugh at you."

"Here is a girl for you that scolds her father! . . . Well,

for my own part, I like 'Hero and Leander' quite as much. The 'Madonna' is a religious subject, which could be hung up in an oratory; but 'Hero and Leander'! Ah! I will buy it, for the flask of oil suggested some ideas to me."

"But I don't understand, papa."

"Virginie, call a cab!" shouted César, in a voice that rang through the house. He had finished shaving, and the shy Anselme Popinot appeared, dragging his feet, for he thought of Césarine. He had not discovered as yet that he was not lame in the eyes of his lady-love, a sweet proof of love, which only those to whom fate has given some bodily deformity can receive.

"The press will be in working order to-morrow, sir," he said.

"Very well. What is the matter, Popinot?" asked César, seeing Anselme's flushed face.

"I am so glad, sir; I have found a place, a front and back shop, and a kitchen, and the rooms above, and a store-room, all for twelve hundred francs a year, in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants."

"We must have an eighteen years' lease of it," said Birotteau. "But let us go to M. Vauquelin, and we can talk on the way," and César and Popinot drove away under the eyes of the assistants, who were at a loss what to think of such magnificent attire, and so unusual a portent as a cab, ignorant as they were of the mighty matters that occupied the owner of the Queen of Roses.

"So we shall soon know the truth about the hazel-nuts!" said the perfumer.

"Hazel-nuts?" queried Popinot.

"You have my secret, Popinot," said the perfumer; "I let slip the word 'hazel-nuts,' and that tells everything. Hazel-nut oil is the only oil which produces any effect on the hair; no other house has thought of it. When I saw the print of 'Hero and Leander,' I said to myself, 'If the ancients put so much oil on their heads, there must have been some reason for it,' for the ancients are the ancients! In spite of

modern pretensions, I am of Boileau's opinion about the ancients. From that I came to the idea of hazel-nuts, thanks to young Bianchon, the medical student, your relative; he told me that the students at the École put hazel-nut oil on their mustaches and whiskers to make them grow. All we want now is the illustrious M. Vauquelin's approval. Enlightened by him, we shall not deceive the public. Only just now I was over in the Market buying the raw material of a saleswoman there; and in another moment I shall be in the presence of one of the greatest scientific men in France for the quintessence of the matter. There's sense in proverbs —extremes meet. Trade is the intermediary between vegetable products and science, you see, my boy! Angélique Madou collects the material, M. Vauquelin distils it, and we sell an essence. Hazel-nuts are worth five sous the pound, M. Vauquelin will increase their value a hundredfold, and we shall perhaps do a service to humanity; for if vanity is a plague of man, a good cosmetic is a benefit."

The devout admiration with which Popinot listened to the father of his Césarine stimulated Birotteau's eloquence; he indulged in the crudest rhetorical display that a philistine's brain can devise.

"Be reverent, Anselme," Birotteau said, as they reached the street in which Vauquelin lived; "we are about to enter the sanctuary of science. Put the 'Madonna' in evidence, but without making any parade of it, on a chair in the dining-room. If only I can manage to say what I want to say without making a muddle of it!" he cried, artlessly. "Popinot, that man produces a chemical effect on me, the sound of his voice makes me quite hot inside, and even gives me a slight colic. He is my benefactor, Anselme, and in a few minutes he will be your benefactor too."

Popinot turned cold at the words, set down his feet as if he were treading on eggs, and looked uneasily round the room.

M. Vauquelin was in his study when Birotteau was announced. The man of science knew that the perfumer

was a deputy-mayor and in high favor; he received his visitor.

"So you do not forget me now that you are so high up in the world," he said; "well, between a chemist and a perfumer there is but a hand's-breadth."

"Alas! there is a great distance between your genius and a plain man like me, sir; and as for what you call 'being high up in the world,' it is all owing to you, and I shall never forget it in this world or the next."

"Oh! in the next we shall all be equal they say, cobblers and kings."

"That is to say, those kings and cobblers who have lived piously," remarked Birotteau.

"Is this your son?" asked Vauquelin, looking at little Popinot, who was beyond expression amazed to find nothing extraordinary in the study. He had expected to see prodigious marvels, giant engines, vivified substances, and metals flying about.

"No, sir; but he is a young man in whom I am very much interested, and he has come to entreat your goodness, which is equal to your talent, and is it not infinite?" remarked Birotteau diplomatically. "We have come, after an interval of sixteen years, to consult you a second time on a matter of importance, concerning which I am as ignorant as a perfumer."

"Let us hear about it. What is it?"

"I know that the subject of hair occupies your nights, and that you are devoting yourself to the analysis of the substance! While you have been thinking for glory, I have been thinking too for trade."

"Dear M. Birotteau, what do you want of me—an analysis of hair?"

He took up a loose sheet.

"I am about to read a paper before the Académie des Sciences," he went on. "Hair is composed of a somewhat large proportion of mucus, a little colorless oil, a larger proportion of dark-greenish oil, and iron; I find a certain amount

of oxide of manganese, and of phosphate of lime, and traces of carbonate of lime, and silica; sulphur enters largely into its composition. The proportions in which these different substances are present vary, and so cause the different colorings of hair. Red hair, for example, on analysis yields much more of the dark-green oil than the other kinds give."

César and Popinot opened their eyes ludicrously wide.

"Nine things," cried Birotteau. "What, are there metals and oils in hair? It takes the word of a man like you, whom I venerate, to make me believe it. How extraordinary! . . . God is great, M. Vauquelin."

"Hair is produced by a follicular organ," the great chemist continued; "a follicle is a sort of bag open at both ends; at the one end it is connected with nerves and blood-vessels, and the hair issues from the other. According to some of our learned associates, one of whom is M. de Blainville, the hair is dead matter expelled from the sac or secreting gland, which is full of a pulpy tissue."

"It is like perspiration in sticks, as you might say," cried Popinot, for which the perfumer promptly kicked his shins.

Vauquelin smiled at Popinot's notion. On this, "He has capacity, hasn't he?" said César, looking at Popinot. "But if hair is dead, to begin with, sir, you can't possibly restore it, and it is all over with us! the prospectus is nonsense! You don't know how funny the public is; you can't go and tell people—"

"That there is a rubbish heap on their heads," said Popinot, trying to make Vauquelin laugh again.

"An aerial catacomb," returned the chemist, keeping up the joke.

"And the nuts that are bought!" cried Birotteau, with a lively sense of the pecuniary loss. "But why do they sell—?"

"Reassure yourself," said Vauquelin, smiling. "I see; some secret for preventing the hair from falling out or turning gray is the matter in question. Listen; here are my conclusions after all my researches."

Popinot pricked up his ears at this like a startled leveret.

"The blanching of the fibres, dead or alive, is, in my opinion, produced by an interruption of the secretion of the coloring matter; this theory would explain the fact that some fur-bearing animals in cold climates turn white or some lighter color at the beginning of winter."

"H'm! Popinot."

"It is evident," Vauquelin continued, "that the change of color is due to sudden change in the temperature of the circumambient air—"

"Circumambient, Popinot—mind that! mind that!" cried César.

"Yes," said Vauquelin, "to alternations of cold and heat, or to interior phenomena, which produce the same effect. So, in all probability, headaches and other local affections dissipate the fluid or derange the secretions. The inside of the head is the doctor's province. As for the outside, put on your cosmetics by all means."

"Well, sir," said Birotteau, "now I can breathe again after what you say. I thought of selling the oil of hazel-nuts, remembering the use the ancients made of oil for their hair; and the ancients are the ancients, I am of Boileau's opinion. Why did wrestlers oil themselves—?"

"Olive-oil would do quite as well as oil of hazel-nuts," said Vauquelin, who had paid no attention to Birotteau's remarks. "Any oil will do to protect the hair-bulbs from outside influences injurious to the substances which it contains in process of formation; in course of deposit, we chemists would say. Perhaps you are right; the essential oil of hazel-nuts is an irritant, so Dupuytren once told me. I will try to find out the difference between walnut and beechnut oils, colza, olive, and so forth."

"Then I am not mistaken," Birotteau exclaimed triumphantly, "and a great man bears me out in my opinion. Macassar is done for! Macassar, sir, is a cosmetic they give you, that is, sell you, and sell very dear, to make your hair grow."

"My dear M. Birotteau," said Vauquelin, "there are not two ounces of oil of Macassar in Europe. Oil of Macassar

produces not the slightest effect on hair. The Malays will pay its weight in gold for it, because of its supposed preservative action on the hair, not knowing that whale oil is quite as good. No power chemical or divine—"

"Oh! divine—do not say that, M. Vauquelin."

"Why, my dear sir, God's first law is conformity with Himself; without unity there is no power—"

"Oh, looked at in that way—"

"No power whatever can make the hair grow on a bald head, and you cannot dye white or red hair without danger; but you will do no harm, and there will be no fraud in extolling your oil, and I think that those who use it might preserve their hair."

"Do you think that the Royal Academy of Science would approve it?"

"Oh! it is no discovery," said M. Vauquelin. "And besides, quacks have taken the name of the Academy in vain so often, that it would not help you at all. My conscience will not allow me to look on oil of hazel-nuts as a prodigy."

"What would be the best way of extracting it, by pressure or by decoction?" asked Birotteau.

"You will obtain the most oil by pressure between two hot plates; but if the plates are cold, it will be of better quality. It ought to be applied to the skin itself, and not rubbed into the hair," continued Vauquelin good-naturedly, "or the effect will be lost."

"Mind you remember this, Popinot,'" said Birotteau, as his face flushed up with enthusiasm.—"You see in him, sir, a young man who will reckon this day among the great days of his life. He knew and revered you before he had seen you. Ah! we often talk of you at home; a name that is always in the heart comes often to the lips. We pray every day for you, my wife and daughter and I, as we ought to do for our benefactor."

"It is too much for so little," said Vauquelin, embarrassed by the perfumer's voluble gratitude.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Birotteau. "You cannot hinder us from loving you, you who will accept nothing from me. You are like the sun; you shed light around you, and those on whom it shines can do nothing for you in return."

The man of science rose, smiling, to his feet; Birotteau and Anselme Popinot rose also.

"Look round, Anselme; take a good look at this study. If you will allow him, sir? Your time is so valuable, perhaps he will never come here again."

"Well, are you satisfied with your business?" asked Vauquelin, turning to Birotteau; "for, after all, we are both of us men of business—"

"Pretty well, sir," said Birotteau, going toward the dining-room, whither Vauquelin followed him; "but it will take a great deal of capital to start this oil under the name of Comagen Essence—"

" 'Essence' and 'Comagen' are two words that clash. Call your cosmetic Birotteau's Oil; or if you have no mind to blaze your name abroad, take another— Why, there is the Dresden Madonna. . . . Ah! M. Birotteau, you mean us to fall out at parting."

"M. Vauquelin," said the perfumer, taking both the chemist's hands in his, "the scarce print has no value save for the persistent efforts which I have made to find it; all Germany has been ransacked for a proof before letters on India paper; I knew you wished to have it, you were too busy to procure it yourself, so I have taken it upon myself to be your agent. Please accept, not a paltry print, but the earnest efforts, the care, and pains which prove a boundless devotion. I should have been glad if you had wanted some substances that could only be found in the depths of an abyss, that I might come to tell you, 'Here they are!' We have so many chances to be forgotten, let me put myself, my wife, and daughter, and the son-in-law whom I shall have one day, all before your eyes; and say to yourself when you see the Madonna, 'There are honest folk who think of me.' "

"I accept it," said Vauquelin.

Popinot and Birotteau wiped their eyes, so much moved were they by the kind tone in which the chemist spoke.

"Will you carry your kindness yet further?" asked the perfumer.

"What is it?" asked Vauquelin.

"I am inviting a few of my friends—(here he raised himself on tiptoe, but his face assumed a humble expression)—partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, and partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor."

"Aha!" said Vauquelin in astonishment.

"It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of royal favor, by discharging my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Bourbons on the steps of Saint-Roch's Church, on the 13th of Vendémiaire, when I was wounded by Napoleon. . . . My wife is giving a ball on Sunday in twenty days' time; will you come to it, sir? Do us the honor of dining with us on that day; and for my own part, it will be as if they had given me the Cross twice. I will write to you in good time."

"Very well, yes," said Vauquelin.

"My heart is swelling with pleasure," cried the perfumer when they were in the street. "He will come to my house! I am afraid that I have forgotten what he said about hair; do you remember it, Popinot?"

"Yes, sir, and in twenty years' time I shall still remember it."

"A great man, that he is! What insight and what penetration!" exclaimed Birotteau. "He went straight to the point, he read our thoughts at once, and showed us how to make a clean sweep of Macassar Oil. Ah! nothing can make hair grow, Macassar, so that is a lie! Popinot, there is a fortune within our grasp. So let us be at the factory by seven o'clock to-morrow morning, the nuts will come in, and we will make the oil. There is no use in his saying that any oil will do; it would be all over with us if the public knew that. If there were not a little hazel-nut oil and

scent in this composition of ours, what excuse should we have for selling it at three or four francs for as many ounces?"

"And you are to be decorated, sir!" said Popinot. "What glory for—"

"For commerce, isn't it, my boy?"

César Birotteau, sure of a fortune, looked so triumphant that the assistants noticed his expression, and made signs to each other; for the appearance of a cab, and the fact that their employer and his cashier had changed their clothes, had given rise to the wildest imaginings. The very evident satisfaction of the pair, revealed by the diplomatic glances exchanged between them, and the hopeful eyes that Popinot turned once or twice on Césarine, announced that some important event was imminent, and confirmed the assistants' suspicions. The smallest chance events in their busy and almost monastic lives were as interesting to them as to any prisoner in solitary confinement. Mme. César's face (for she responded doubtfully to the Olympian looks her husband turned on her) portended some new development in the business, for at any other time Mme. César would have been serenely content—Mme. César, who was so blithe over a good day, and to-day the takings had amounted to the extraordinary sum of six thousand francs; some old outstanding accounts had been paid.

The dining-room and the kitchen were both on the mezzanine floor, where César and Constance had lived during the first years of their married life. This dining-room, where their honeymoon had been spent, looked like a little drawing-room. The kitchen windows looked out into a little yard; a passage separated the two rooms, and gave access to the staircase, contrived in a corner of the back-shop.

Raguet the errand boy looked after the shop while they sat at dinner; but when dessert appeared, the assistants went downstairs again, and left César and his wife and daughter to finish their meal by the fireside. This tradition had been handed down from the days of the Ragons, who had kept up all the old-fashioned customs and usages in full vigor, and

set the same enormous distance between themselves and the assistants that formerly existed between masters and apprentices. Césarine or Constance would then prepare the cup of coffee, which the perfumer took in a low chair by the fire. It was the hour when César told his wife all the small news of the day; he would tell her anything that he had seen in Paris, or what they were doing in the Faubourg du Temple, and about the difficulties that arose there.

"This is certainly one of the most memorable days in our lives, wife!" he began, when the assistants had gone downstairs. "The hazel-nuts have been bought, the hydraulic press will be ready for work to-morrow, the matter of the building lands has been concluded. And, while I think of it, just put away this order on the bank," he went on, handing over to her Pillerault's draft. "The redecoration of the rooms, our new rooms, has been settled.—Dear me! I saw a very queer man to-day in the Cour Batave!"

And he told the women about M. Molineux.

"I see," his wife broke in, in the middle of a tirade, "that you will have to pay two hundred thousand francs!"

"True, my wife," said the perfumer, with mock humility. "Good Lord! and how are we to pay it? for the building lands near the Madeleine, that will be the finest quarter of Paris some day, must be taken as worth nothing."

"Some day, César."

"Dear, dear!"—he continued his joke—"my three-eighths will only be worth a million in six years' time. And how shall we pay two hundred thousand francs?" asked César, making as though he were aghast. "Well, we will pay it with this," and he drew from his pocket one of Mme. Madou's hazel-nuts, which he had carefully kept.

He held it up between his thumb and finger. Constance said nothing; but Césarine, whose curiosity was tickled, brought her father his cup of coffee with a "Come, now, papa, are you joking?"

The perfumer, like his assistants, had noticed the glances

Popinot had given Césarine during dinner; he meant to clear up his suspicions.

"Well, little girl, this hazel-nut is to work a revolution in the house. There will be one less under our roof after to-night."

Césarine looked straight at her father, as who should say, "What is that to me?"

"Popinot is going away."

Although César was a poor observer, although his remark had been meant to prepare the way for the announcement of the new firm of A. Popinot and Company, as well as for a trap for his daughter, his father's tenderness told him the secret of the vague emotions which sprang up in the girl's heart, and blossomed in red upon her cheek and brow, brightening her eyes before they fell. César thought at once that some word had been exchanged between Césarine and Popinot. Nothing of the kind had happened; the boy and girl understood each other, after the fashion of shy young lovers, without a word.

There are moralists who hold that love is the most involuntary, the most disinterested and least calculating of all passions, a mother's love always excepted, a doctrine which contains a gross error. The larger part of mankind may be ignorant of their motives; but any sympathy, physical or mental, is none the less based upon calculations made by brain or heart or animal instincts. Love is essentially an egoistical affection, and egoism implies profound calculation. For the order of mind which is only impressed by outward and visible results, it may seem an improbable or unusual thing that a poor, lame, red-haired lad should find favor in the eyes of a beautiful girl like Césarine; and yet it was only what might be expected from the workings of the bourgeois mind in matters of sentiment. The explanation would account for other marriages that are a constant source of amazement to onlookers, between tall or beautiful women and insignificant men, or when some well-grown stripling marries some ugly little creature.

For a man afflicted with any physical deformity, be it a clubfoot, lameness, a hunch-back, excessive ugliness, spot, blemish, or disfigurement, Roguin's infirmity, or other anomalous affection for which his progenitors are not responsible, there are but two courses open; he must either make himself feared, or cultivate an exquisite goodness—he cannot afford to steer an undecided middle course between the two extremes like the rest of humanity. The first alternative requires talent, genius, or force of character; for a man can only inspire terror by his power to do harm, impose respect by his genius, or compel fear by his prodigious wit. In the second he studies to be adored; he lends himself admirably to feminine tyranny, and is wiser in love than others of irreproachable physical proportions.

Anselme Popinot had been brought up by the good Ragons, upright citizens of the best type, and by his uncle the judge—a course of training which, with his ingenuous and religious nature, had led him to redeem his slight deformity by the perfection of his character. Constance and César, struck by a disposition which makes youth so attractive, had often praised Anselme in Césarine's hearing. With all their narrowness in other respects, this shopkeeper and his wife possessed nobility of soul and hearts that were quick to comprehend. Their praises found an echo in the girl's own heart; in spite of her inexperience, she read in Anselme's frank eyes a passion that is always flattering, no matter what the age, rank, or figure of the lover may be.

Little Popinot, not being a well-shaped man, had all the more reasons for loving a woman. Should she be fair, he would be her lover till his dying day; love would give him ambition; he would work himself to death to make his wife happy; he would suffer her to be the sovereign mistress of his home; and her empire over him would be boundless.

This, crudely stated, is perhaps what Césarine thought, unconsciously within herself; she had had a bird's-eye glimpse of the harvests of love, and she had drawn her own inferences; her mother's happiness was under her eyes, she

wished no other life for herself; instinctively she discerned in Anselme another César, polished by education, as she herself had been. In her dreams, Popinot was the mayor of an arrondissement, and she liked to imagine herself asking for subscriptions to charities in her district, as her own mother did in the parish of Saint-Roch. And so at length she forgot that one of Popinot's legs was shorter than the other, and would have been quite capable of asking, "Does he really limp?" She liked the clear eyes; she liked to see the change that came over them when, at a glance from her, they lighted up at once with a flash of timid love, and then fell despondently again.

Roguin's head-clerk, Alexandre Crottat, gifted with a precocious knowledge of the world, acquired by professional experience, disgusted Césarine with his half-cynical, half-good-natured air, after putting her out of patience with his commonplace talk. Popinot's silence revealed a gentle nature; she liked to watch the half-sad smile with which he endured meaningless trivialities; the babble which made him smile always roused a feeling of annoyance in her; they smiled or looked condolence at each other.

Anselme's mental superiority did not prevent him from working hard with his hands; the way in which he threw himself into everything that he did also pleased Césarine; she guessed that while all the other assistants said, "Césarine is going to be married to M. Roguin's head clerk," Anselme, lame and poor and red-haired, did not despair of winning her. The strength of a hope proves the strength of a love.

"Where is he going?" Césarine asked, trying to look indifferent.

"He is going to set up for himself in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants! And, upon my word, by the grace of God!—" But neither his wife nor daughter understood the ejaculation. When Birotteau's mind encountered any difficulty, he behaved like an insect that encounters an obstacle, he

swerved to left or right; so now he changed the subject, promising himself to speak of Césarine to his wife.

"I told uncle your notions about Roguin and your fears; he began to laugh," he went on, addressing Constance.

"You ought never to repeat things that we say between ourselves," she cried. "Poor Roguin! he may be the most honest man in the world; he is fifty-eight years old, and I expect he no more thinks—"

She broke off; she saw that Césarine was listening, and warned César of that fact by a glance.

"So I did well to strike the bargain?"

"Why, you are the master," returned she.

César took both his wife's hands in his, and kissed her on the forehead. That answer had always been her passive form of assent to her husband's projects. And with that, Birotteau went downstairs into the shop.

"Come!" he cried, speaking to the assistants, "we will put up the shutters at ten o'clock. We must do a stroke of work, gentlemen! We must set about moving all the furniture from the first floor to the second to-night! We shall have to put the little pots into the big ones, as the saying is, so as to give my architect elbow-room to-morrow.—Popinot has gone out without leave," said César, looking round. "Oh! I forgot, he does not sleep here.—He is gone to see about the shop, or else he is putting down M. Vauquelin's ideas," he thought.

"We know why the furniture is being moved, sir," said Célestin, spokesman for the two assistants and Raguet, who stood by him. "May we be allowed to congratulate you on an honor which reflects glory on the whole establishment? . . . Popinot told us—"

"Well, boys, it can't be helped; I have been decorated. So we are inviting a few friends, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, and partly on the occasion of my own promotion to the Legion of Honor. It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of royal favor by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and

by fighting for the Royalist cause—when I was your age, on the steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire; and, on my word, Napoleon the Emperor, as they called him, gave me my wound. For I was wounded, and on the thigh, what is more, and Mme. Ragon nursed me. Be brave, and you will be rewarded! So there, you see, my children, that a mishap is never all loss."

"People don't fight in the streets nowadays," said Célestin.

"Well, we must hope," said César, and thereupon he took occasion to read his assistants a little homily, which he rounded off with an invitation.

The prospect of a dance put new life into the three assistants; under the stimulus of the excitement, the three, with Virginie and Raguet, performed acrobatic feats. They came and went up and down the stairs with their loads, and nothing was broken, nothing was upset. By two o'clock in the morning the removal was accomplished; César and his wife slept on the second floor, Célestin and the second assistant occupied Popinot's room. The third floor was converted, for the time being, into a furniture warehouse.

When the assistants had gone down into the shop after dinner, Popinot, usually so quiet and equable, had been as fidgety as a racehorse just arrived upon the course. A burning desire to do something great was upon him, induced by a superabundance of nervous fluid, which turns the diaphragm of the lover or the man of restless ambition into a furnace.

"What can be the matter with you?" Célestin had asked.

"What a day! I am setting up for myself, my dear fellow," he whispered in Célestin's ear, "and M. César is to be decorated."

"You are very lucky; the governor is helping you," exclaimed the assistant.

Popinot gave him no answer; he vanished, whirled away by the wind—the wind of success.

"Oh, as to lucky!" said an assistant, as he sorted gloves

in dozens, to his neighbor, who was busy checking the prices on the tickets. "The governor has seen the eyes that Popinot has been making at Mlle. Césarine; he is a shrewd one, the governor, so he is getting rid of Anselme; it would be difficult to refuse outright, because of the relatives. Célestin takes the trick for generosity."

Anselme Popinot meanwhile had turned down the Rue Saint-Honoré and hurried along the Rue des Deux-Ecus to secure some one in whom his commercial second-sight beheld the principal instrument of success. Judge Popinot had once done a service to this young man, the cleverest commercial traveller in Paris, whose activity and triumphant gift of the gab was to earn for him at a later day the title of "The Illustrious." At this time the great commercial traveller was devoting his energies to the hat-trade and the "fancy-goods line"; he was simply Gaudissart as yet, without the prefix, but at the age of twenty-two he had already distinguished himself; his magnetic influence upon customers was beginning to be recognized. He was thin and bright-eyed at that time; he had an eloquent face, an indefatigable memory, a quick perception of the taste of those with whom he came in contact; he deserved to be, what he afterward became—the king of commercial travellers, the Frenchman *par excellence.*

Popinot had come across Gaudissart some days previously, and the latter had announced that he was about to go on a journey; the hope of finding him still in Paris had sent Popinot flying down the Rue des Deux-Ecus. At the coach-office he learned that the commercial traveller had taken his place. Gaudissart's leave-taking of his beloved city had taken the shape of an evening at the Vaudeville, where there was a new play. Popinot resolved to wait for him. To confide the agency of the hazel-nut oil to this invaluable launcher of commercial enterprises, already courted and cherished by the best houses, was like drawing a bill of exchange on fortune!

Popinot had claims on Gaudissart. The commercial trav-

eller, so skilled in the art of entangling that forward race, the petty country shopkeepers, in his toils, had once allowed himself to become entangled in a political web, in the first conspiracy against the Bourbons after the Hundred Days; and Gaudissart, to whom open air was a vital necessity, found himself in prison with a capital charge hanging over him. Judge Popinot, the examining magistrate, saw that it was a piece of youthful folly that implicated Gaudissart in the affair, and set him at liberty; but if the young man had chanced upon a magistrate eager to commend himself to the authorities, or upon a Rabid Royalist, the luckless pioneer of commerce might have mounted the scaffold. Gaudissart, who knew that he owed his life to the judge, was in despair, because a barren gratitude was all the return he could make; and as it was impossible to thank a judge for doing justice, he had betaken himself to the Ragons, and there sworn fealty to the family of Popinot.

While Popinot waited, he naturally spent the time in going to see his shop in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants once more. He asked for the landlord's address, so as to come to terms with him about the lease. Then, wandering through the murky labyrinth about the Great Market, with his thoughts full of ways and means of making a rapid fortune, Popinot came into the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, and there met with a wonderful and auspicious opportunity, with which César's heart should be gladdened on the morrow. Then he took up his post at the door of the Hotel du Commerce at the end of the Rue des Deux-Ecus; and toward midnight heard, afar off, a voice uplifted in the Rue de Grenelle; it was Gaudissart singing a bit of the last song in the piece, to the accompaniment of the sound of a walking-stick, trailed with expression upon the pavement.

"Sir," cried Anselme, suddenly emerging from the doorway, "can I have a couple of words with you?"

"Eleven, if you like," said the other, raising a loaded cane.

"I am Popinot," said poor Anselme.

"Right," said Gaudissart, recognizing his friend. "What do you want? Money? Absent on leave, but there is some somewhere. An arm for a duel? I am at your service from heel to head.

" 'You see him where he stands—
Every inch a Frenchman and a soldier!' "

"Come and have ten minutes' talk with me, not in your room, we might be overheard, but on the Quai de l'Horloge; there is nobody there at this time of night," said Popinot, "it is a question of the greatest importance."

"You are in a hurry, are you? Come along!"

Ten minutes later, Gaudissart, now put in possession of Popinot's secrets, recognized the importance of the matter.

"Approach, ye hairdressers and retail perfumers," cried Gaudissart, mimicking Lafon in the Cid. "I will get hold of all the perfumers of France and Navarre. Oh! I have it! I was going away, but I shall stop here now and take agencies from the Parisian perfumery trade."

"Why?"

"To choke off your competitors, innocent! By taking on their agencies, I can make their perfidious cosmetics drink to their own confusion in your oil, for I shall talk of nothing else and push no other kind. A fine commercial traveller's dodge! Aha! we are the diplomatists of commerce. Famous! As for your prospectus, I will see to it. I have known Andoche Finot since we were boys; his father is a hatter in the Rue du Coq, the old fellow started me; it was through him that I began to travel in the hat line. Andoche is a very clever fellow; he has the cleverness of all the heads that his father ever fitted with hats. He is in the literary line; he does the minor theatres for the 'Courrier des Spectacles.' His father, an old fox, has abundant reason for not liking cleverness; he doesn't believe in cleverness; it is impossible to make him see that cleverness will sell, and that a young man of spirit can make a fortune by his wits; indeed, as to spirit, the only spirit he approves of is proof-spirit. Old

Finot is reducing young Finot by famine. Andoche can do anything, and he is my friend moreover, and I don't rub against fools (except in the way of business). Finot does mottoes for the 'Fidèle Berger,' which pays him, while the newspapers, for which he works like a galley-slave, snub him right and left. How jealous they are in that line! It is just like it is in the fancy article trade.

"Finot wrote a splendid one-act comedy for Mlle. Mars, the greatest of the great. (Ah! there's a woman that I admire!) Well, and to see it put on the stage at all, he had to take it to the Gaité. Andoche understands prospectuses; he enters into a man's ideas about business, he is not proud, he will block out our prospectus *gratis*. Goodness! we will treat him to a bowl of punch and little cakes; for, no nonsense, Popinot; I will travel for you without commission or expenses; your competitors shall pay me, I will bamboozle them. Let us understand each other clearly. The success of this thing is a point of honor with me; my reward shall be to be best-man at your wedding! I will go to Italy, Germany, and England! I will take placards in every language with me, and have them posted up everywhere, in the villages, at church doors, and in all the good situations that I know in country towns! The oil shall make a blaze; it shall be on every head! Ah! your marriage will not be a marriage in water-colors; it shall be done in oils! You shall have your Césarine, or I am not 'The Illustrious,' a nickname old Finot gave me because I made a success of his gray hats. I shall be sticking to my own line, too, the human head; oil and hats, as is well known, are meant to preserve the hair of the public."

Popinot went to his aunt's house, where he was to spend the night, in such a fever, brought on by visions of success, that the streets seemed to him to be rivers of oil. He scarcely slept at all, dreamed that his hair was growing at a furious rate, and beheld two angels, who unrolled above his head a scroll (as in a pantomime), whereon the words *Cesarian Oil* were written; and he awoke, but remembered his dream, and

determined to give the name to the oil of hazel-nuts. He saw the will of Heaven revealed in this fancy.

César and Popinot were both at the factory in the Faubourg du Temple long before the hazel-nuts arrived. While they waited for Mme. Madou's porters, Popinot in high glee told the history of his treaty of alliance with Gaudissart.

"We have the Illustrious Gaudissart for us; we shall be millionnaires!" cried the perfumer, holding out a hand to his cashier, with the air of a Louis XIV. receiving a Maréchal de Villars after Denain.

"And yet another thing," said the happy assistant, drawing a bottle from his pocket, a gourd-shaped flask, flattened so as to present several sides. "I have found ten thousand bottles like this one, ready made and washed, at four sous and six months' credit."

"Anselme," said Birotteau, beholding this marvel, "yesterday" (here his voice grew solemn), "yesterday, in the garden of the Tuileries—yes, no longer ago than yesterday, your words to me were, 'I shall succeed.' To-day, I myself say to you, 'You will succeed!' Four sous! Six months! An entirely new shape! Macassar is shaking in his shoes; what a deathblow for Macassar! What a good thing that I have bought up all the nuts I could lay my hands on in Paris! But where did you find these bottles?"

"I was waiting to speak to Gaudissart, and sauntering about—"

"Just as I once did," exclaimed Birotteau.

"And as I went down the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, I saw a wholesale glass merchant's place, a dealer in bell-glasses and glass shades, who has a very large stock; I saw this bottle— Oh! it stared me in the face like a flash of light; something said, 'Here is the thing for you!'"

"A born merchant! He shall have my daughter," muttered César.

"In I went, and saw thousands of the bottles standing there in boxes."

"Did you ask him about them?"

"You do not think me such a ninny!" cried Anselme, grieved at the thought.

"Born merchant!" repeated Birotteau.

"I went in to ask for glass shades for little wax statuettes. While I was bargaining for the glass shades, I found fault with the shape of these bottles. That led to a general confession; my bottle merchant went from one thing to another, and told me that Faille and Bouchot, who failed lately, were about to bring out a cosmetic, and wanted an out-of-the-way shape. He distrusted them; he wanted half the money down; Faille and Bouchot, hoping for a success, parted with the money, and the failure came out while the bottles were being made. When they put in a claim to the trustees for the rest, the trustees compromised the matter by leaving them with all the bottles and half the money that had been paid, as an indemnity for goods which they said were absurdly shaped, and impossible to dispose of. The bottles cost him eight sous, and he would be glad to let any one have them for four. He might have them on his hands for Heaven knew how long; there was no sale for such a shape. 'Will you engage to supply ten thousand at four sous? I can take the bottles off your hands; I am M. Birotteau's assistant.' And so I opened up the subject, and drew him out, led him on, and put pressure on my man, and he is ours."

"Four sous!" said Birotteau. "Do you know that we can bring out the oil at three francs, and make thirty sous, leaving twenty to the retailers?"

"The Cesarian Oil!" cried Popinot.

"Cesarian Oil? . . . Ah, master lover, you have a mind to flatter father and daughter. Very well; let it be Cesarian Oil if you like. The Cæsars conquered the world; they must have had famous heads of hair."

"Cæsar was bald," said Popinot.

"Because he did not use our oil, people will say. The Cesarian Oil at three francs; Macassar Oil costs twice as much. Gaudissart is in it; we shall make a hundred thou-

sand francs a year, for we will set down all heads that respect themselves for a dozen bottles every twelvemonth; eighteen francs of profit! Say there are eighteen thousand heads—a hundred and forty-four thousand francs. We shall be millionnaires."

When the hazel-nuts arrived, Raguet and the workpeople, with Popinot and César, cracked the shells, and a sufficient quantity was pressed. In four hours' time they had several pounds' weight of oil. Popinot took some of it to Vauquelin, who presented him with a formula for diluting the essential oil with a less expensive medium and for perfuming it. Popinot straightway took steps for taking out a patent for the invention and the improvement. It was Popinot's ambition to pay his share of the expense of starting the enterprise, and the devoted Gaudissart loaned the money for the deposit.

Prosperity has an intoxicating effect, which always turns weak heads. One result of this uplifted state of mind is readily foreseen. Grindot came. He brought with him a sketch in water-colors of a charming interior, the design for the future rooms when furnished. Birotteau was carried away by it. He agreed to everything, and the workmen began at once; every stroke of the pickaxe drew groans from the house, and from Constance. The painter, M. Lourdois, a very wealthy contractor, who engaged to leave nothing undone, talked of gilding the drawing-room. Constance interposed at this.

"M. Lourdois," said she, "you have thirty thousand francs a year of your own; you live in your own house, and you can do what you like in it; but for people like us—"

"Madame, commerce ought to shine; it should not suffer itself to be eclipsed by the aristocracy. Besides, here is M. Birotteau in the Government; he is a public man—"

"Yes, but he is still in the shop," said Constance aloud, before the assistants and her five auditors; "neither he, nor I, nor his friends, nor his enemies will forget that."

Birotteau raised himself on tiptoe several times, with his hands clasped behind his back.

"My wife is right," said he. "We will be modest in prosperity. Besides, so long as a man is in business, he ought to be careful of his expenses, and to keep them within bounds; indeed, he is bound by law not to indulge in 'excessive expenditure.' If the enlargement of my premises, and the amount spent on the alterations, exceeds a certain limit, it would be imprudent in me to go beyond it; you yourself would blame me, Lourdois. The quarter has its eyes upon me; successful people are looked upon jealously and envied.—Ah! you will soon know that, young man," he said, addressing Grindot; "if they slander us, at any rate let us give them no cause to say evil of us."

"Neither slander nor spite can touch you," said Lourdois; "your position makes an exception of you; and you have had such a great experience of business that you know how to keep your affairs within due limits. You are shrewd."

"I have had some experience of business, it is true; do you know the reason why we are enlarging our house? If I exact a heavy penalty to secure punctuality it is—"

"No."

"Well, then, my wife and I are inviting a few friends, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil, partly on the occasion of my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor."

"What, what?" cried Lourdois. "Have they given you the Cross?"

"Yes. It may be that I have shown myself worthy of this signal mark of Royal favor by discharging my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Royalist cause on the 13th of Vendémiaire at Saint-Roch, when I was wounded by Napoleon. Will you come and bring your wife and your young lady—?"

"Enchanted by the honor you condescend to bestow upon me," said Lourdois, a Liberal. "But you are a droll fellow, Birotteau; you mean to make sure that I shall keep my word, and that is why you ask me to come. Well, well; I will set my best workmen on to it; we will have roaring fires to dry

the paint and use drying processes, for it will not do to dance in a room full of steam from the damp plaster. The surface shall be varnished, so that there shall be no smell."

Three days later, the announcement of Birotteau's forthcoming ball created a flutter in the commercial world of that quarter. And not only so, every one could see for himself the timber props, necessitated by the hurried alteration of the staircase, and the square wooden shaft holes, through which the rubbish was shot into the carts beneath. The men in their haste worked by torchlight, for they had a night-and-day shift, and this collected idlers and inquisitive gazers in the street. On such preparations as these, the gossip of the neighborhood reared sumptuous fabrics of conjecture.

On the Sunday, when the documents relative to the building land were to be signed, M. and Mme. Ragon, and Uncle Pillerault, came at four o'clock, after vespers. César said that as the house was so much pulled to pieces he could only ask Charles Claparon, Roguin, and Crottat for that day. The notary brought a copy of the "Journal des Débats," in which M. de la Billardière had inserted the following paragraph:

"We hear that the liberation of the soil will be celebrated with enthusiasm throughout France; but, in Paris, the members of the municipal administration have felt that the time had come for reviving the splendor of the capital, which has been eclipsed during the foreign occupation from a feeling of patriotism. Each of the mayors and deputy-mayors proposes to give a ball, so that the winter season promises to be a very brilliant one, and the National movement will be followed up. Among the many fetes about to take place is the much-talked-of ball to be given by M. Birotteau, recently nominated for the Legion of Honor, and so widely known for his devotion to the Royalist cause. M. Birotteau, wounded in the affair of Saint-Roch on the 13th of Vendémiaire, and one of the most highly respected judges of the Consular Tribunal, has doubly deserved this distinction."

"How well they write nowadays!" exclaimed César.—"They are talking about us in the paper," he added, turning to Pillerault.

"Well, and what of that?" returned the uncle, who particularly detested the "Journal des Débats."

"Perhaps the paragraph may sell some of the Pate des Sultanes and the Toilet Lotion," said Mme. César in a low voice to Mme. Ragon. Mme. Birotteau did not share her husband's exhilaration.

Mme. Ragon, a tall, thin woman, with a sharp nose and thin lips, looked a very fair imitation of a marquise of the *ancien régime.* A somewhat wide margin of red encircled her eyes, as sometimes happens with aged women who have known many troubles. Her fine austere face, in spite of its kindliness, was dignified, and there was moreover a quaint something about her which struck beholders, yet did not excite a smile, a something interpreted by her manner and her dress. She wore mittens; she carried in all weathers a cane umbrella, such as Marie-Antoinette used at the Trianon; her favorite color was that particular pale shade of brown known as *feuille-morte;* her skirts hung from her waist in folds, which will never be seen again, for the dowager ladies of a bygone day have taken their secret with them. Mme. Ragon had not given up the black mantilla bordered with square-meshed black lace; the ornaments in her old-fashioned caps reminded you of the filagree work on old picture-frames. She took snuff with the dainty neatness and the little gestures which a younger generation may recall, if they have been so fortunate as to see their great-aunt or grandmother solemnly set her gold snuff-box on the table beside her, and shake the stray grains from her fichu.

The Sieur Ragon was a little man, five feet high at the most, with a countenance of the nutcracker type. Two eyes were visible, two prominent cheek-bones, a nose, and a chin. As he had lost his teeth, he mumbled half his words, but he talked like a brook, politely, somewhat pompously, and always with a smile—the same smile with which he had greeted

the fair ladies of quality whom one chance or another brought to his shop. His hair, tightly scraped back from his forehead and powdered, described a snowy half-moon on his head, with a pair of "pigeon's wings" on either side of a neat queue tied with ribbon. He wore a cornflower-blue coat, a white waistcoat, silk breeches and stockings, black silk gloves, and shoes with gold buckles to them. The most peculiar thing about him was his habit of walking out in the street hat in hand. He looked rather like a messenger of the Chamber of Peers, or some usher-in-waiting at the palace—one of those attendant satellites of some great power, which shine with a reflected glory, and remain intrinsically insignificant.

"Well, Birotteau," he remarked, and from his tone he might have been addressing an assistant, "are you sorry now, my boy, that you took our advice in those days? Did we ever doubt the gratitude of our beloved royal family?"

"You must be very happy, my dear," said Mme. Ragon, addressing Mme. Birotteau.

"Yes, indeed," returned the fair Constance, who always fell under the charm of that cane umbrella, those butterfly caps, those tight-fitting sleeves, and the ample fichu *à la Julie* that Mme. Ragon wore.

"Césarine looks charming.—Come here, pretty child," said Mme. Ragon. She spoke in a patronizing manner, and with a high head-voice.

"Shall we settle the business before dinner?" asked Uncle Pillerault.

"We are waiting for M. Claparon," said Roguin; "he was dressing when I left him."

"M. Roguin," César began, "does he quite understand that we are to dine in a wretched little *entresol*—"

("Sixteen years ago he thought it magnificent," murmured Constance.)

"Among the rubbish, and with all the workmen about?"

"Pooh! you will find him a good fellow, and not hard to please," said Roguin.

"I have left Raguet to look after the shop: we cannot come in and out of our own door now; as you have seen, it has all been pulled down," César returned.

"Why did you not bring your nephew?" asked Pillerault of Mme. Ragon.

"Shall we see him later?" suggested Césarine.

"No, darling," said Mme. Ragon. "Anselme, dear boy, is working himself to death. I am afraid of that close street where the sun never shines; that vile-smelling Rue des Cinq-Diamants; the gutter is always black or blue or green. I am afraid he may die there. But when young people set their minds upon anything—!" she said, turning to Césarine with a gesture that interpreted "mind" as "heart."

"Then, has the lease been signed?" asked César.

"Yesterday, before a notary," Ragon replied. "He has taken the place for eighteen years, but he pays the rent six months in advance."

"Well, M. Ragon, are you satisfied with me?" Birotteau asked. "I have given him the secret of a new discovery—in fact!"

"We know you by heart, César," said little Ragon, taking César's hands, and pressing them with devout friendliness.

Roguin meanwhile was not without inward qualms. Claparon was about to appear on the scene, and his habits and manner of talking might be something of a shock to these respectable citizens. He thought it necessary to prepare their minds, and spoke, addressing Ragon, Pillerault, and the women.

"You will see an eccentric character," he said; "he hides his talents beneath shocking bad manners; his ideas have raised him from a very low position. No doubt he will acquire better tastes in the society of bankers. You might come across him slouching half-fuddled along the boulevard, or in a café playing at billiards: he looks like a great hulking idiot.—But nothing of the kind; he is thinking all the time, pondering how to put life into trade by new ideas."

"I can understand that," said Birotteau; "my best ideas

came to me while I was sauntering about, didn't they, dear?"

"Claparon makes up for lost time at night, after spending the daytime in meditating over business combinations. All these very clever people lead queer inexplicable lives," Roguin continued. "Well, with all his desultory ways, he gains his end, as I can testify. He made all the owners of our building land give way at last; they were not willing, they demurred at this and that; he mystified them—tired them out; day after day he went to see them, and this time the lots are ours."

A peculiar sounding *broum! broum!* characteristic of drinkers of strong waters and spirits, announced the arrival of the most grotesque personage in this story—who was in the future to enact the part of the arbiter of César's destinies. The perfumer hurried down the narrow, dark staircase, partly to tell Raguet to close the shop, partly to make his excuses for receiving Claparon in the dining-room.

"Eh, what? Oh, it will do very well for stowing the vict—, I mean for doing business in."

In spite of Roguin's skilful opening, the entrance of the sham great banker at once produced an unpleasant impression upon those well-bred citizens, M. and Mme. Ragon, upon the observant Pillerault, and upon Césarine and her mother.

At the age of twenty-eight, or thereabout, the former commercial traveller had not a hair on his head, and wore a wig of corkscrew curls. Such a manner of dressing the hair demands a girlish freshness, a milk-white skin, and the daintiest feminine charm; so it brought out all the vulgarity of a pimpled countenance, a dark-red complexion, flushed like that of a stage coachman, and covered with premature wrinkles and deeply-cut grotesque lines which told of a dissolute life: its ill effects could be read only too plainly in the bad state of his teeth and the black specks dotted over the shrivelled skin.

There was something about Claparon that suggested the

provincial actor who frequents fairs, and is prepared to play any and every part, to whose worn, shrunken cheeks and flabby lips the paint refuses to adhere; the tongue always wagging even when the man is drunk; the shameless eyes, the compromising gestures. Such a face as this, lighted up by the hilarious flames of punch, little befitted a man accustomed to important business. Indeed, only after prolonged and necessary studies in mimicry had Claparon succeeded in adopting a manner not wholly out of keeping with his supposed importance. Du Tillet had assisted personally at Claparon's toilet, anxious as a nervous manager over the first appearance of his principal actor, for he trembled lest the vicious habits of a reckless life should appear through the veneer of the banker.

"Say as little as you can," said his mentor; "a banker never babbles; he acts, thinks, meditates, listens and ponders. So, to look like a real banker, you must either not speak at all, or say insignificant things. Keep those ribald eyes of yours quiet; look solemn at the risk of looking stupid. In politics, be for the Government, but keep to generalities, such as—'There is a heavy budget; compromise as parties stand is out of the question; Liberalism is dangerous; the Bourbons ought to avoid all collisions; Liberalism is a cloak to hide the schemes of the Coalition; the Bourbons are inaugurating an epoch of prosperity, so let us give them our support, whether we are well affected to them or not; France has had enough of political experiments,' and the like. And don't sprawl over all the tables; remember that you have to sustain the dignity of a millionnaire. Don't snort like a pensioner when you take snuff; play with your snuff-box, and look at your boots or at the ceiling before you give an answer; look as wise as you can, in fact. Above all things, rid yourself of your unlucky habit of fingering everything. In society a banker ought to look as if he were glad to let his fingers rest. And look here! you work at night, you are stupid with making calculations, there are so many things to consider in the starting of an enterprise! so much think-

ing is involved! Grumble, above all things, and say that trade is very bad. Trade is dull, slow, hard to move, perplexing. Keep to that, and let particulars alone. Don't begin to sing drolleries of Béranger's at table, and don't drink too much; you will ruin your prospects if you get tipsy. Roguin will keep an eye on you; you are going among moral people, respectable, steady-going folk, don't frighten them by letting out some of your pothouse principles."

This homily produced on Charles Claparon's mind an effect very similar to the strange sensation of his new suit of clothes. The rollicking prodigal, hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, accustomed to the comfortable, disreputable garments in which his outer man was as much at home as his thoughts in the language that clothed them, held himself upright, stiff as a poker in the new clothes for which the tailor had kept him waiting to the last minute, and was as ill at ease in his movements as in this new phraseology. He put out a hand unthinkingly toward a flask or a box, then, hurriedly recollecting himself, drew it in again, and in the same way he began a sentence and stopped short in the middle, distinguishing himself by a ludicrous incoherence, which did not escape the observant Pillerault. His round face, like the rakish-looking corkscrew ringlets of his wig, were totally out of keeping with his manner, and he seemed to think one thing and say another. But the good folk concluded that his inconsequence was the result of preoccupation.

"He does so much business," said Roguin.

"Business has given him very little breeding," Mme. Ragon said to Césarine.

M. Roguin overheard her, and laid a finger on his lips. "He is rich, clever, and honorable to a fault," he said, bending to Mme. Ragon.

"He may be excused something for such qualities as those," said Pillerault to Ragon.

"Let us read over the papers before dinner," said Roguin. "We are alone."

Mme. Ragon, Césarine, and Constance left the contracting parties, Pillerault, Ragon, César, Roguin, and Claparon, to listen to the reading of the documents by Alexandre Crottat. César signed a mortgage bond for forty thousand francs secured on the land and the factory in the Faubourg du Temple (the money had been loaned by one of Roguin's clients); he paid over to Roguin Pillerault's order on the bank, gave (without taking a receipt) twenty thousand francs' worth of bills from his portfolio, and drew another bill for the remaining hundred and forty thousand francs on Charles Claparon.

"I have no receipt to give you," said that gentleman. "You are acting for your own side with M. Roguin, as we are doing for our share. Our vendors will receive their money from him in coin; I only undertake to complete your payment by paying a hundred and forty thousand francs for your bills—"

"That is right," said Pillerault.

"Well, then, gentlemen, let us call in the ladies again, for it is cold without them," said Claparon, with a look at Roguin to see whether he had gone too far.

"Ladies! . . . Ah! mademoiselle is your young lady, of course," said Claparon, looking at Birotteau, and straightening himself up. "Well, well, you are not a bungler. Not one of the roses that you have distilled can be compared with her, and perhaps it is because you have distilled roses that—"

"Faith!" said Roguin, interrupting him, "I own that I am hungry."

"Very well, let us have dinner," said Birotteau.

"We are to have dinner in the presence of a notary," said Claparon, with an important air.

"You do a great deal of business, do you not?" said Pillerault, purposely seating himself next to the banker.

"A tremendous amount, wholesale," replied Claparon; "but trade is dull, hard to move—there are canals now. Oh, canals! You have no idea how busy we are with canals.

That is comprehensible. The Government wants canals. A canal is a want generally felt. All the trade of a department is interested in a canal, you know! A stream, said Pascal, is a moving highway. The next thing is a market, and markets depend on embankments, for there are a frightful lot of embankments, and the embankments interest the poorer classes, and that means a loan, which finally benefits the poor! Voltaire said, '*Canal, canard, canaille!*' But Government depends for information on its own engineers; it is difficult to meddle in the matter, at least, it is difficult to come to an understanding with them; for the Chamber—Oh! sir, the Chamber gives us trouble! The Chamber does not want to grapple with the political question hidden beneath the financial question. There is bad faith on all sides. Would you believe this? There are the Kellers—well, then, François Keller is a public speaker, he attacks the measures of the Government as to the funds and canals. He comes home, and then my fine gentleman finds us with our propositions; they are favorable, and he has to make it up with the aforesaid Government, which he attacked so insolently an hour ago. The interests of the public speaker clash with the interests of the banker; we are between two fires. Now you understand how thorny affairs become; you have to satisfy everybody—the clerks, the people in the chambers, and the people in the antechambers, and the Ministers—"

"The Ministers?" asked Pillerault, who wished to probe this partner's mind thoroughly.

"Yes, sir, the Ministers."

"Well, then, the newspapers are right," said Pillerault.

"Here is uncle on politics," said Birotteau; "M. Claparon has set him off."

"Newspapers!" said Claparon, "there are some more confounded humbugs! Newspapers throw us all into confusion; they do us a good turn now and then, but the cruel nights they make me spend! I would as lief be without them; they are the ruin of my eyes in fact, poring over them and working out calculations."

"But to return to the Ministers," said Pillerault, hoping for revelations.

"Ministers have exigencies which are purely governmental.—But what am I eating; is it ambrosia?" asked Claparon, interrupting himself. "Here is a sort of sauce that you only have in citizens' houses; you never get it at grub-shops—"

At that word, the ornaments on Mme. Ragon's cap skipped like rams. Claparon gathered that the expression was low, and tried to retrieve his error.

"That is what the heads of large banking firms call the high-class taverns—Véry, and the Frères Provençaux. Well, neither those vile grub-shops, nor our most accomplished cooks, make you a soft, mellow sauce; some give you water with lemon-juice in it, and others give you chemical concoctions."

The conversation at dinner chiefly consisted in attacks from Pillerault, who tried to plumb his man, and only found emptiness; he looked upon him as a dangerous person.

"It is going on all right," said Roguin in Charles Claparon's ear.

"Oh! I shall get out of my clothes to-night, I suppose," answered Claparon, who was gasping for breath.

"We are obliged to use our dining-room as a sitting-room, sir," said Birotteau, "because we are looking forward to a little gathering of our friends in eighteen days' time, partly to celebrate the liberation of the soil—"

"Right, sir; I myself am also for the Government. My political convictions incline me to the *statu quo* of the great man who guides the destinies of the house of Austria, a fine fellow! Keep what you have, to get more; and, in the first place, get more, to keep what you have.—So now you know the bottom of my opinions, which have the honor to be those of Prince Metternich!"

"Partly on the occasion of my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor," César went on.

"Why, yes, I know. Now who was telling me about that? Was it the Kellers, or Nucingen?"

Roguin, amazed at so much presence of mind, signified his admiration.

"Oh, no; it was at the Chamber."

"At the Chamber. Was it M. de la Billardière?" asked César.

"The very man."

"He is charming," said César, addressing his uncle.

"He pours out talk, talk, talk, till you are drowned in talk," said Pillerault.

"It may be," resumed Birotteau, "that I have shown myself worthy of this favor—"

"By your achievements in perfumery; the Bourbons know how to reward merit of every kind. Ah! let us stand by our generous legitimate Princes, to whom we shall owe unheard-of prosperity about to be.—For, you may be sure of it, the Restoration feels that she must enter the lists with the Empire, and the Restoration will make peaceful conquests; you will see conquests! . . ."

"You will no doubt honor us by coming to our ball, sir," said Mme. César.

"To spend an evening with you, madame, I would miss a chance of making millions."

"He certainly is a babbler," said César in his uncle's ear.

While the waning glory of the Queen of Roses was about to shed abroad its parting rays, a faint star was rising above the commercial horizon; at that very hour, little Popinot was laying the foundations of his fortune in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants. The Rue des Cinq-Diamants, a short, narrow thoroughfare, where loaded wagons can scarcely pass each other, runs between the Rue des Lombards and the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, into which it opens just opposite the end of the Rue Quincampoix, that street so famous in the history of France and of old Paris.

In spite of this narrowness, the near neighborhood of the

druggists' quarter made the place convenient; and from that point of view, Popinot had not made a bad choice. The house (the second from the end nearest the Rue des Lombards) was so dark that at times it was necessary to work by artificial light in the daytime. Popinot had taken possession the evening before of all its darkest and most unsavory recesses. His predecessor, a dealer in treacle and raw sugars, had left his mark on the place; the walls, the yard, and the storehouse bore unmistakable traces of his occupation.

Imagine a large and roomy shop, and huge doors barred with iron and painted dragon-green, the solid iron scroll-work, with bolt-heads as large as mushrooms by way of ornament. The shop was adorned and protected, as bakers' shops used to be, by wire-work lattices, which bulged at the bottom, and was paved with great slabs of white stone, cracked for the most part. The walls of a guard-house are not yellower nor barer. Further on came the back-shop and kitchen, which looked out into the yard; and behind these again a second storeroom, which must at one time have been a stable. An inside staircase had been contrived in the back-shop, by which you gained two rooms that looked out upon the street; here Popinot meant to have his counting-house and his ledgers. Above the warehouse there were three small rooms, all backed against the party-wall, and lighted by windows on the side of the yard. It was in these dilapidated rooms that Popinot proposed to live.

The view from the windows was shut in by the high walls that rose about the dingy, crooked yard, walls so damp that even in the driest weather they looked as if they had been newly distempered. The cracks in the paving-stones were choked with black, malodorous filth, deposited there during the tenancy of the dealer in treacle and raw sugars. So much for the outlook. As to the rooms themselves, only one of them boasted a fireplace; the floors were of brick, the walls were unpapered.

Gaudissart and Popinot had been busy there ever since

the morning, putting up a cheap wallpaper with their own hands in the ugly room; a journeyman paperhanger whom Gaudissart ferreted out had varnished it for them. The furniture consisted of a student's mattress, a wooden bedstead painted red, a rickety nightstand, a venerable chest of drawers, a table, a couple of armchairs, and half-a-dozen ordinary chairs, a present from Popinot the judge to his nephew. Gaudissart had put a cheap pier-glass over the chimney-piece. It was almost eight o'clock in the evening, and the two friends, sitting before a blazing fire, were about to discuss the remains of their breakfast.

"Away with the cold mutton! It is out of character in a house-warming," cried Gaudissart.

Popinot held up his last twenty-franc piece, which was to pay for the prospectus. "But I—" he began.

"I? . . ." retorted Gaudissart, sticking a forty-franc piece into his eye.

A knock at the street door reverberated through the yard. It was Sunday, the workpeople were taking their holiday away from their workshops, and the idle echoes greeted every sound.

"There is my trusty man from the Rue de la Poterie," Gaudissart went on. "For my own part, it is not simply 'I,' but 'I have.'"

And, in fact, a waiter appeared, followed by two kitchen boys, carrying between them three wicker baskets, containing a dinner, and crowned by six bottles of wine selected with discrimination.

"But how are we to eat such a lot of things?" asked Popinot.

"There is the man of letters," cried Gaudissart. "Finot understands the pomps and vanities. The artless youth will be here directly with a prospectus fit to make your hair stand on end (neat that, eh?), and prospectuses are always dry work. You must water the seeds if you mean to have flowers.—Here, minions," he added, striking an attitude for the benefit of the kitchen-boys, "here's gold for you."

He held out six sous with a gesture worthy of his idol, Napoleon.

"Thank you, M. Gaudissart," said the scullions, more pleased with the joke than with the money.

"As for thee, my son," he continued, turning to the waiter who remained, "there is a portress here. She crouches in the depths of a cave, where at times she does some cooking, as erewhile Nausicaa did the washing, simply by way of relaxation. Hie thee to her, work on her trustful nature; interest her, young man, in the temperature of thy hot dishes. Say to her that she shall be blessed, and above all things respected, highly respected, by Felix Gaudissart, son of Jean-François Gaudissart, and grandson of Gaudissart, vile proletaries of remote lineage, his ancestors. Off with you, and act in such a sort that everything shall be good; for if it isn't, I will make you laugh on the wrong side of your face."

There was another knock at the door.

"That is the ingenious Andoche," said Gaudissart.

A stout young fellow suddenly entered. He had somewhat chubby cheeks, was of middle height, and from head to foot looked like the hatter's son. A certain shrewdness lurked beneath the air of constraint that sat on his rounded features. The habitual dejection of a man who is tired of poverty left him, and a hilarious expression crossed his countenance, at the sight of the preparations on the table and the significant seals on the bottle corks. At Gaudissart's shout, a twinkle came into the pale-blue eyes, the big head, on which a Kalmuck physiognomy had been carved, rolled from side to side, and he gave Popinot a distant greeting, in which there was neither servility nor respect, like a man who feels out of his element and stands on his dignity.

Finot was just beginning to discover that he had no sort of talent for literature; he did not think of quitting his calling; he meant to exploit literature by raising himself on the shoulders of men who possessed the talent which he lacked. Instead of doing ill-paid work himself, he would turn his business capacities to account. He was just at the turning-

point; he had exhausted the expedients of humility; he had experienced to the full the humiliations of failure; and, like those who take a wide outlook over the financial world, he resolved to change his tactics, and to be insolent in future. He needed capital in the first instance, and Gaudissart had opened out a prospect of making the money by putting Popinot's oil before the public.

"You will make his arrangements with the newspapers," Gaudissart had said, "but don't swindle him; if you do, there will be a duel to the death between us; give him value for his money!"

Popinot looked uneasily at the "author." Your true man of business regards an author with mixed feelings, in which alarm and curiosity are blended with compassion; and though Popinot had been well educated, his relations' attitude of mind and ways of thinking, together with a course of drudgery in a shop, had produced their effect on his intelligence, and he bent beneath the yoke of use and wont. You can see this by noticing the metamorphoses which ten years will effect among a hundred boys, who when they left school or college were almost exactly alike.

Andoche mistook the impression which he had made for admiration.

"Very well. Let us run through the prospectus before dinner, then it will be off our minds, and we can drink," said Gaudissart. "It is uncomfortable to read after dinner; the tongue is digesting too."

"Sir," said Popinot, "a prospectus often means a whole fortune."

"And for nobodies like me," said Andoche, "fortune is nothing but a prospectus."

"Ah! very good," said Gaudissart. "That droll fellow of an Andoche has wit enough for the Forty."

"For a hundred," said Popinot, awestruck with the idea.

Gaudissart snatched up the manuscript, and read aloud, and with emphasis, the first two words—"Cephalic Oil!"

"I like Cesarian Oil better," said Popinot.

"You don't know them in the provinces, my friend," said Gaudissart. "There is a surgical operation known by that name, and they are so stupid, that they will think your oil is meant to facilitate childbirth; and if they start off with the notion, it would be too hard work to bring them all the way back to hair again."

"Without defending the name," observed the author, "I would call your attention to the fact that Cephalic Oil means oil for the head, and resumes your ideas."

"Go on!" said Popinot impatiently.

And here follows a second historical document, a prospectus, which even at this day is circulating by thousands among retail perfumers.

GOLD MEDAL, PARIS, 1824[1]

CEPHALIC OIL

(Improved Patent)

No cosmetic can make the hair grow; and in the same way, it cannot be dyed by chemical preparations without danger to the seat of the intelligence. Science has recently proclaimed that the hair is not a living substance, and that there is no means of preventing it from blanching or falling out. To prevent xerasia and baldness, the bulb at the roots should be preserved from all atmospheric influences, and the natural temperature of the head evenly maintained. The *Cephalic Oil*, based on these principles established by the Royal Academy of Sciences, induces the important result so highly prized by the ancients, the Romans and Greeks, and the nations of the North—a fine head of hair. Learned research has brought to light the fact that the nobles of olden times, who were distinguished by their long, flowing locks, used no other means than these; their recipe, long lost, has been ingeniously rediscovered by A. POPINOT, inventor of *Cephalic Oil*.

To preserve the glands, and not to provoke an impossible or hurtful stimulation of the dermis which contains them, is, therefore, the function of *Cephalic Oil*. This oil, which exhales a delicious fragrance, prevents the exfoliation of the pellicle; while the substances of which it is composed (the essential oil of the hazel-nut being the principal element) counteract the effects of atmospheric air upon the head, thus preventing chills, catarrh, and all unpleasant encephalic affections by maintaining the natural temperature. In this manner the glands,

[1] The next "Quinquennial Exhibition."

which contain the hair-producing secretions, are never attacked by heat or cold. A fine head of hair—that glorious product so highly valued by either sex—may be retained to extreme old age by the use of *Cephalic Oil*, which imparts to the hair the brilliancy, silkiness, and gloss which constitutes the charm of children's heads.

Directions for use are issued on the wrapper of every bottle.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE

It is perfectly useless to apply oil to the hair itself: besides being an absurd superstition, it is an obnoxious practice, for the cosmetic leaves its traces everywhere.

It is only necessary to part the hair with a comb, and to apply the oil to the roots every morning with a small, fine sponge, proceeding thus until the whole surface of the skin has received a slight application, the hair having been previously combed and brushed.

To prevent spurious imitations, each bottle bears the signature of the inventor. Sold at the price of THREE FRANCS by A. POPINOT, Rue des Cinq-Diamants, Quartier des Lombards, Paris.

It is particularly requested that all communications by post should be prepaid.

Note.—A. POPINOT also supplies essences and pharmaceutical preparations such as neroli, oil of spike-lavender, oil of sweet almonds, cacao-butter, caffeine, castor oil, *et cætera*.

"My dear fellow," said the Illustrious Gaudissart, addressing Finot, "it is perfectly written! Ye gods, how we plunge into deep science! No shuffling; we go straight to the point! Ah! I congratulate you heartily; there is literature of some practical use!"

"A fine prospectus!" cried Popinot enthusiastically.

"The very first sentence is a deathblow to Macassar," said Gaudissart, rising to his feet with a magisterial air, to proclaim with an oratorical gesture between each word, "'You—cannot—make—hair—grow.—It—cannot—be—dyed—without—danger!' Aha! success lies in that. Modern science corroborates the custom of the ancients. You can suit yourself to old and young. You have to do with an old man.—Aha, sir! the Greeks and Romans, the ancients, were in the right; they were not such fools as some would make them out to be! Or if it is a young man.—My dear fellow, another discovery due to the progress of enlightenment; we are pro-

gressing. What must we not expect from steam, and the telegraph, and such like inventions? This oil is the outcome of M. Vauquelin's investigations!—How if we were to print an extract from M. Vauquelin's paper, eh? Capital! Come, Finot, draw up your chair! Let us stow the victuals, and tipple down the champagne to our young friend's success!"

"It seems to me," said the author modestly, "that the time for the light and playful prospectus has gone by; we are entering on an epoch of science, and must talk learnedly and authoritatively to make an impression on the public."

"We will push the oil. My feet, and my tongue, too, are hankering to go. I have agencies for all the houses that deal in hairdressers' goods, not one of them gives more than thirty per cent of discount; make up your mind to give forty, and I will engage to sell a hundred thousand bottles in six months. I will make a set on all the druggists, grocers, and hairdressers! And if you will allow them forty per cent on your oil, they will all send their customers wild for it."

The three young men ate like lions, drank like Swiss, and waxed merry over the future success of the Cephalic Oil.

"This oil goes to your head," said Finot, smiling, and Gaudissart exhausted whole series of puns on the words oil, head, and hair.

In the midst of their Homeric laughter over the dessert, the knocker sounded, and in spite of the toasts and the wishes for luck exchanged among the three friends, they heard it.

"It is my uncle! He is capable of coming to see me," cried Popinot.

"An uncle?" asked Finot, "and we have not a glass!"

"My friend Popinot's uncle is an examining magistrate," said Gaudissart, by way of reply to Finot; "there is no occasion to hoax him, he saved my life. Ah! if you had found yourself in the fix I was in, with the scaffold staring you in the face, where, *kouik*, off goes your hair for good!" (and he imitated the fatal knife by a gesture), "you would be apt to remember the righteous judge to whom you owe the pres-

ervation of the channel that the champagne goes down! You would remember him if you were dead drunk. You don't know, Finot, but what you may want M. Popinot one day. *Saquerlotte!* You must make your bow to him, and thirteen to the dozen!"

It was, as a matter of fact, the "righteous judge," who was asking for his nephew of the woman who opened the door. Anselme recognized the voice, and went down, candle in hand, to light his way.

"Good-evening, gentlemen." said the magistrate.

The Illustrious Gaudissart made a profound bow. Finot looked the new-comer over with drunken eyes, and decided that Popinot's uncle was tolerably wooden-headed.

"There is no luxury here," said the judge, gravely looking round the room; "but, my boy, you must begin by being nothing if you are to be something great."

"How profound he is!" said Gaudissart, turning to Finot.

"An idea for an article," said the journalist.

"Oh! is that you, sir?" said the judge, recognizing the commercial traveller. "Eh! what are you doing here?"

"I want to do all my little part, sir, toward making your dear nephew's fortune. We have just been pondering over the prospectus for this oil of his, and this gentleman here is the author of the prospectus, which seems to us to be one of the finest things in the literature of periwigs."

The judge looked at Finot.

"This gentleman is M. Andoche Finot," Gaudissart said, "one of the most distinguished young men in literature; he does political leaders and the minor theatres for the Government newspapers; he is a Minister who is by way of being an author."

Here Finot tugged at Gaudissart's coat-tails.

"Very well, boys," said the judge, to whom these words explained the appearance of the table covered with the remnants of a feast very excusable under the circumstances.

"As for you, Anselme," he continued, turning to Popinot, "get ready to pay a visit to M. Birotteau; I must go to see

him this evening. You will sign your deed of partnership; I have gone through it very carefully. As you are going to manufacture your oil in the Faubourg du Temple, I think that he ought to make over the lease of the workshop to you, and that he has power to sublet; if things are all in order, it will save disputes afterward. These walls look to me to be very damp, Anselme; bring up trusses of straw, and put them round about where your bed stands."

"Excuse me, sir," said Gaudissart with a courtier's suppleness, "we have just put up the wall-paper ourselves to-day, and—it—is—not quite dry."

"Economy! good!" said the judge.

"Listen," said Gaudissart in Finot's ear; "my friend Popinot is a good young man; he is going off with his uncle, so come along and let us finish the evening with our fair cousins."

The journalist turned out the lining of his waistcoat pocket. Popinot saw the manœuvre, and slipped a twenty-franc piece into the hand of the author of his prospectus. The judge had a cab waiting at the corner of the street, and carried off his nephew to call on Birotteau.

Pillerault, M. and Mme. Ragon, and Roguin were playing at boston, and Césarine was embroidering a fichu, when the elder Popinot and Anselme appeared. Roguin, sitting opposite Mme. Ragon, could watch Césarine, who sat by her side, and saw the happy look on the girl's face when Anselme came in, saw her flush up red as a pomegranate flower, and called his head-clerk's attention to her by a significant gesture.

"So this is to be a day of deeds, is it?" said the perfumer, when greetings had been exchanged, and the judge explained the reason of the visit.

César, Anselme, and the judge went up to the perfumer's temporary quarters on the second floor to debate the matter of the lease and the deed of partnership drawn up by the elder Popinot. It was arranged that the lease should run for eighteen years, so as to be conterminous with the lease

of the house in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants; trifling matter as it appeared at the time, it was destined later to serve Birotteau's interests.

When they returned to the sitting-room, the elder Popinot, surprised by the confusion and the men at work on a Sunday in the house of so devout a man, asked the reason of it all. This was the question for which César was waiting.

"Although you are not worldly, sir, you will not object to our celebrating our deliverance; and that is not all—if we are arranging for a little gathering of our friends, it is partly also to celebrate my promotion to the Order of the Legion of Honor."

"Ah!" said the examining magistrate (who had not been decorated).

"It may be that I have shown myself not unworthy of this signal mark of Royal favor by discharging my functions at the Tribunal . . . oh! I mean to say Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for the Royalist cause on the steps—"

"Yes," said the magistrate.

"Steps of Saint-Roch, on the 13th of Vendémiaire, where I was wounded by Napoleon."

"I shall be glad to come," said M. Popinot; "and if my wife is well enough, I will bring her."

"Xandrot," said Roguin, on the door-step, "give up all thoughts of marrying Césarine; in six weeks' time you will see that I have given you sound counsel."

"Why?" asked Crottat.

"My dear fellow, Birotteau is about to spend a hundred thousand francs over this ball of his, and he is embarking his whole fortune, against my advice, in this building-land scheme. In six weeks' time these people will not have bread to eat. Marry Mlle. Lourdois, the house-painter's daughter; she has three hundred thousand francs to her fortune. I have planned this shift for you. If you will pay me down the money, you can have my practice to-morrow for a hundred thousand francs."

The splendors of the perfumer's forthcoming ball, announced to Europe by the newspapers, were very differently announced in commercial circles by flying rumors of workpeople employed night and day on the perfumer's house. The rumors took various forms; here it was said that César had taken the house on either side; there, that his drawing-rooms were to be gilded; some said that no tradespeople would be invited, and that the ball was given to Government officials only; and the perfumer was severely blamed for his ambition, they scoffed at his political aspirations, they denied that he had been wounded! More than one scheme was set on foot, in the second arrondissement, in consequence of the ball; the friends of the family took things quietly, but the claims of distant acquaintances were vast.

Those who have favor to bestow, never lack courtiers; and a goodly number of the guests were at no little pains to procure their cards of invitation. The Birotteaus were amazed to find so many friends whose existence they had not suspected. This eagerness on their part alarmed Mme. Birotteau; she looked more and more gloomy as the days went by and the solemn festival came nearer. She had confessed to César from the very first that she should not know how to act her part as hostess, and the innumerable small details frightened her. Where was the plate to come from? How about the glass, the refreshments, the forks and spoons? And who would look after it all?—She begged Birotteau to stand near the door and see that no one came who had not been asked to the ball; she had heard strange things about people who came to dances claiming acquaintance with people whom they did not know by name.

One evening, ten days before the famous Sunday, Messieurs Braschon, Grindot, Lourdois, and Chaffaroux the contractor having given their word that the rooms should be ready for the 17th of December, there had been a laughable conference after dinner in the humble little sitting-room on the mezzanine floor—César and his wife and daughter were making a list of guests and writing the cards of invitation,

which had been sent in only that morning, nicely printed in the English fashion on rose-colored paper, in accordance with the precepts laid down in the "Complete Guide to Etiquette."

"Look here!" said César; "we must not leave anybody out."

"If we forget any one," remarked Constance, "we shall be reminded of it. Mme. Derville, who never called upon us before, sailed in yesterday evening in great state."

"She was very pretty; I liked her," said Césarine.

"Yet before she was married she was even worse off than I," said Constance; "she used to do plain needlework in the Rue Montmartre; she has made shirts for your father."

"Well, let us put the great people down at the top of the list," said César. "Write 'M. le Duc and Mme. la Duchesse de Lenoncourt,' Césarine."

"Goodness! César," cried Constance, "pray don't begin to send invitations to people whom you only know through the business. Are you going to ask the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry? She is more nearly related to your late godmother, the Marquise d'Uxelles, than even the Duc de Lenoncourt. And shall you ask the two MM. Vandenesse, M. de Marsay, M. de Ronquerolles, M. de l'Aiglemont; in short, all your customers? You are mad; honors are turning your head—"

"Yes! but M. le Comte de Fontaine and his family. Eh? He used to come to the Queen of Roses under the name of *Grand-Jacques* with the *Gars* (M. le Marquis de Montauran that was) and M. de la Billardière, whom they called the *Nantais* in the days before the great affair of the 13th of Vendémiaire. And they would shake hands with you then, and it was, 'My dear Birotteau, keep your heart up, and give your life, like the rest of us, for the good cause!' We are old fellow-conspirators."

"Put him down," said Constance; "if M. de la Billardière and his son are coming, they must have somebody to speak to."

"Set down his name, Césarine," said Birotteau.—"*Imprimis*, His Worship the Prefect of the Seine; he may or may not come, but he is the head of the municipal corporation, and 'honor to whom honor is due.'—M. de la Billardière, the mayor, and his son. (Write down the number of the people after every name.)—My colleague, M. Granet, and his wife. She is very ugly, but, all the same, we cannot leave her out. —M. Curel, the goldsmith, Colonel of the National Guard, and his wife and two daughters. Those are what I call the authorities. Now for the bigwigs!—M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de Fontaine and their daughter, Mlle. Emile de Fontaine."

"An insolent girl, who makes me come out of the shop to speak to her at her carriage door in all weathers," said Mme. César. "If she comes at all, it will be to make fun of us."

"In that case, perhaps she will come," said César, who meant to fill his rooms at all costs. "Go on, Césarine—M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de Granville, my landlord, the hardest head in the Court of Appeal, Derville says.—Oh! by the by, M. de la Billardière has arranged for me to be presented to-morrow by M. le Comte de Lacépède himself; it is only polite to ask the Grand Chancellor to dinner and to the ball.—M. Vauquelin. Put him down for the dinner and for the ball too, Césarine. And, while we remember it, all the Chiffrevilles and the Protez family.—M. Popinot, judge of the Tribunal of the Seine, and Mme. Popinot.—M. and Mme. Thirion, he is an usher of the Privy Chamber, and a friend of the Ragons; it is said that their daughter is to be married to one of M. Camusot's sons by his first marriage."

"César, do not forget young Horace Bianchon; he is M. Popinot's nephew and Anselme's cousin," put in Constance.

"Ah, to be sure! Césarine has put a figure four very plainly after the Popinots.—M. and Mme. Rabourdin; M. Rabourdin is at the head of one of the departments in M. de la Billardière's division.—M. Cochin of the same department,

and his wife and son; they are sleeping-partners in Matifat's concern; and while we are about it, put down M. and Mme. and Mlle. Matifat."

"The Matifats have been making overtures for their friends, M. and Mme. Colleville, M. and Mme. Thuillier, and the Saillards."

"We shall see," said César. "Our stockbroker, M. Jules Desmarets and his wife."

"She will be the prettiest woman in the room!" cried Césarine. "I like her, oh! more than any one!"

"Derville and his wife."

"Just put down M. and Mme. Coquelin, who took over Uncle Pillerault's business," said Constance. "They made so sure of being asked, that the poor little thing is having a grand ball-dress made by my dressmaker—a white satin overskirt covered with tulle, embroidered with blue chicory flowers. It would not have taken much to persuade her to have a gold embroidered court-dress. If we left them out, we should make two bitter enemies."

"Put them down, Césarine; we must show our respect for trade, for we are tradespeople ourselves.—M. and Mme. Roguin."

"Mamma, Mme. Roguin will wear her *rivière*, all her diamonds, and her Mechlin lace gown."

"M. and Mme. Lebas," César continued.—"And next, the President of the Tribunal of Commerce and his wife and two daughters (I forgot to put them among the authorities).—M. and Mme. Lourdois and their daughter.—M. Claparon the banker; M. du Tillet, M. Grindot, M. Molineux; Pillerault and his landlord; M. and Mme. Camusot, the rich silk mercer, and all their family, the one at the École polytechnique and the advocate; he will receive an appointment as judge—he is the one that is engaged to be married to Mlle. Thirion."

"It will only be a provincial appointment," said Césarine.

"M. Cardot, Camusot's father-in-law, and all the young

Cardots. Stay! there are the Guillaumes in the Rue du Colombier, Lebas's wife's people, two old folk who will be wall-flowers.—Alexandre Crottat—Célestin—"

"Papa, do not forget M. Andoche Finot and M. Gaudissart, two young men who have been so useful to M. Anselme."

"Gaudissart? He got himself into trouble. But, never mind, he is going away in a few days, and will travel for our oil—so put him down! As for Master Andoche Finot, what is he to us?"

"M. Anselme says that he will be a great man; he is as clever as Voltaire."

"An author is he? They are all of them atheists."

"Put him down, papa; so far there are not so very many men who dance. Besides, your nice prospectus for the oil was his doing."

"He believes in our oil, does he?" said César. "Put him down, dear child."

"So I too have my protégés on the list," commented Césarine.

"Put M. Mitral, my process-server, and our doctor, M. Haudry; it is for form's sake, he will not come."

"He will come for his game of cards," said Césarine.

"Ah! by the by, César, I hope that you will ask M. l'Abbé Loraux to dinner!"

"I have written to him already," said César.

"Oh! we must not forget Lebas's sister-in-law, Mme. Augustine de Sommervieux," said Césarine. "Poor little thing! she is very unwell; Lebas said that she was dying of grief."

"See what comes of marrying an artist," cried the perfumer.—"Just look at your mother; she has fallen asleep," he said, in a low voice, to his daughter. "By-by—sleep softly, Madame César.—Well, now," said César, turning to his daughter, "how about your mother's dress?"

"Yes, papa, everything will be ready. Mamma thinks that she is to have a Canton crape gown like mine, and the dressmaker is sure that there is no need to try it on."

"How many are there altogether?" César went on aloud, as his wife opened her eyes.

"A hundred and nine, with the assistants," said Césarine.

"Where are we going to put all those people?" asked Mme. Birotteau. "And when all is over, after the Sunday comes Monday," she said naively.

Nothing can be done simply when people aspire to rise from one social rank to another. Neither Mme. Birotteau, nor César, nor any one else might venture on any pretext whatsoever on to the first floor. César had promised the errand-boy Raguet a new suit of clothes if he kept watch faithfully and carried out his orders properly. Like the Emperor Napoleon at Compiègne, when he had the chateau restored for his marriage with Marie-Louise of Austria, Birotteau wanted to see nothing till the whole was finished; he meant to enjoy "the surprise." So all unconsciously the old enemies met, this time not on the field of battle, but on the common ground of bourgeois vanity. M. Grindot was to take César over the new rooms like a cicerone exhibiting a gallery to a tourist.

Every one in the house, moreover, had his or her own "surprise." Césarine, the dear child, had spent a hundred louis, all her little hoard, on books for her father. M. Grindot had confided to her one morning that there were two fitted bookcases in her father's room, which was to be a study; this was the architect's surprise; and Césarine spent all her savings with a bookseller. She had bought the works of Bossuet, Racine, Voltaire, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Molière, Buffon, Fénelon, Delille, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, La Fontaine, Corneille, Pascal, and La Harpe; in short, the ordinary collection of classics to be seen everywhere, books which her father would never read. A terrible bookbinder's bill must of necessity be the result. Thouvenin, that great and unpunctual artist and binder, had undertaken to send the books home on the 18th at midday. Césarine had told her uncle in confidence of her difficulty, and he had undertaken the bill. César's surprise for his

wife took the shape of a cherry-colored velvet gown trimmed with lace; it was of this dress that he had just spoken to the daughter, who had been his accomplice. Mme. Birotteau's surprise for the new Chevalier of Honor consisted of a pair of gold buckles and a solitaire-pin. Finally, there was the surprise of the new rooms for the whole family, to be followed in a fortnight by the great surprise of the bills to be paid.

After mature reflection César decided that some of the invitations must be given in person, and some might be delivered by Raguet in the evening. He took a cab and handed his wife into it (his wife, whose beauty suffered a temporary eclipse from a hat and feathers and the last new shawl, the cashmere shawl for which she had longed for fifteen years), and away went the perfumers dressed in their best to acquit themselves of twenty-two calls in a morning.

César spared his wife the difficulties attendant on straining the resources of a bourgeois household to prepare the various confections which the splendor of the occasion demanded. A treaty was arranged between Birotteau and the great Chevet. Chevet would furnish the dinner and the wines; he would provide a splendid service of plate (which brings in as much as an estate to its owner), and a retinue of servants under the command of a sufficiently imposing *maître d'hotel*, all of them responsible for their sayings and doings. Chevet was to take up his quarters in the kitchen and dining-room on the mezzanine floor, and not to quit possession until he had served up a dinner for twenty persons at six o'clock, and a grand collation an hour after midnight. The ices, to be served in pretty cups with silver-gilt spoons on silver trays, would be supplied by Foy's Café, and the refreshments by Tanrade—an added lustre to the feast.

"Be easy," César said to his wife, who looked somewhat over-anxious on the day before the great day, "Chevet, Tanrade, and the people from Foy's Café will occupy the mezzanine floor, Virginie will be on guard above, and the shop

shall be shut up. There is nothing left for us to do but to strut about on the first floor."

On the 16th, at two o'clock, M. de la Billardière came for César. They were to go together to the Chancellerie de la Légion d'honneur, where Birotteau, with some ten others, was to be received as a Chevalier by M. le Comte de Lacépède. The perfumer had tears in his eyes when the mayor came for him; the surprise which Constance had planned had just taken place, and César had been presented with the gold buckles and solitaire.

"It is very sweet to be so loved," said he, as he stepped into the cab; Constance and Césarine standing on the threshhold, and the assistants gathered in a group to see him go. All of them gazed at César in his silk stockings and black-silk breeches, and the new coat of cornflower blue on which the ribbon was about to blaze—the red ribbon which, according to Molineux, had been steeped in blood.

When César came back at dinner-time, he was pale with joy. He looked at his Cross in every looking-glass, for in his first intoxication he could not be content to wear the ribbon only; there was no tinge of false modesty about his elation.

"The Grand Chancellor is charming, dear," said he; "at a word from M. de la Billardière, he accepted my invitation; he is coming with M. Vauquelin. M. de Lacépède is a great man, yes, as great as M. Vauquelin. He has written forty volumes. And then he is a peer of France as well as an author. We must not forget to say 'Your Lordship,' or 'M. le Comte,' when we address him."

"Do eat your dinner," remarked his wife.—"Your father is worse than a child," Constance added, looking at Césarine.

"How nice that looks at your button-hole!" said Césarine. "They will present arms when you pass; we will go out together!"

"All the sentries will present arms to me."

Grindot and Braschon came downstairs as he spoke. "After dinner, sir, you and madame and mademoiselle may

like to look over the rooms; Braschon's foreman is just putting up a few curtain brackets, and three men are lighting the candles."

"You will need a hundred and twenty candles," said Braschon.

"A bill for two hundred francs from Trudon," began Mme. César, but a look from the Chevalier checked her lamentations.

"Your fête will be magnificent, M. le Chevalier," put in Braschon.

"Flatterers already!" César thought within himself. "The Abbé Loraux enjoined it upon me not to fall into their snares, and to remain humble; I will keep my origin in mind."

But César did not understand the drift of the remark let fall by the rich upholsterer of the Rue Saint-Antoine. Braschon had made a dozen futile efforts to secure invitations for himself and his wife, his daughter, aunt, and mother-in-law. And so César made an enemy. On the threshold, Braschon did not call him again "M. le Chevalier."

Then came the private view. César and his wife and Césarine went out through the shop and came in from the street. The door had been reconstructed in a grand style, the two leaves were divided up into square panels, and in the centre of each panel was a cast-iron ornament, duly painted. This kind of door, which is now so common in Paris, was at that time the very newest thing. Beneath the double staircase in the vestibule, opposite the door, in the plinth which had so disturbed César's mind, a sort of box had been contrived where an old woman could be ensconced. The vestibule, with its black-and-white marble floor, and its walls painted to look like marble, was lighted by a lamp of antique pattern, with four sockets for the wicks. The architect had combined a rich effect with apparent simplicity. A narrow crimson carpet relieved the whiteness of the stone. The first landing gave access to

the mezzanine floor. The door on the staircase, which gave access to the first-floor rooms, was in the same style as the street door, but this was a piece of cabinet work.

"How charming!" said Césarine. "And yet there is nothing which catches the eye."

"Exactly, mademoiselle, the effect is produced by the exact proportions of the stylobates, the plinths, the cornice, and the ornaments; and then I have not employed gilding anywhere; the colors are subdued, and there are no glaring tones."

"It is a science," said Césarine.

Then they entered the anteroom; it was simple, spacious, and tastefully decorated; a parquet floor had been laid down. The drawing-room was lighted by three windows, which looked upon the street; here the colors were white and red; the outlines of the cornices were delicate, so was the paint; there was nothing to dazzle the eyes. The ornaments on the mantel-shelf, of white marble supported on white marble columns, had been carefully chosen; there was nothing tawdry about them, and they were in keeping with the details of the furniture. In fact, throughout the room a subtle harmony prevailed, such as none but an artist can establish, by subordinating everything, down to the least accessories, to the general scheme of decoration; a harmony which strikes the philistine, though he cannot account for it. The light of twenty-four wax-candles in the chandelier displayed the glories of the crimson silk curtains; the parquet floor tempted Césarine to dance. Through a green-and-white boudoir they reached César's study.

"I have put a bed here," said Grindot, throwing open the doors of an alcove, cleverly concealed between the two bookcases. Either you or Mme. Birotteau may fall ill, and an invalid requires a separate room."

"But the bookcase is full of bound books! . . . Oh! wife, wife!" cried César.

"No, this is Césarine's surprise."

"Pardon a father's emotion," exclaimed Birotteau, embracing his daughter.

"Of course, of course, sir," said Grindot. "You are in your own house."

The prevailing tone of the study was brown, relieved by green; for by skilful modulations all the rooms were brought into harmony with each other. Thus the prevailing color of one room was more sparingly introduced as a subsidiary in another, and *vice versâ*. The print of "Hero and Leander" shone conspicuous from a panel in César's new sanctum.

"And *you* are to pay for all this?" César said merrily.

"That beautiful engraving is M. Anselme's gift to you," said Césarine.

(Anselme, like the others, had managed to afford his surprise.)

"Poor boy! he has done as I did for M. Vauquelin."

Mme. Birotteau's room came next in order. Here the architect had lavished splendors to please the good folk whom he wished to use to his own ends. He had promised to make a study of this redecoration, and he had kept his word. The room was hung with blue silk, but the cords and tassels were white; while the furniture, covered with white cashmere, was relieved with blue. The clock on the white marble chimney-piece took the form of a marble slab, on which Venus reclined. The pretty Wilton carpet, of Eastern design, was the keynote of Césarine's apartment, a dainty little bedroom hung with chintz; there stood her piano, a pretty wardrobe with a mirror in it, a small white bed with plain curtains, and all the little possessions that girls love.

The dining-room lay behind César's study and the blue-and-white bedroom, and was entered by a door on the staircase. Here the decorations were in the style known as Louis XIV. The sideboards were inlaid with brass and tortoise-shell; there was a Boule clock, and the walls were hung with stuffs and adorned with gilt studs.

No words can describe the joy of these three human

beings, which reached its height when Mme. Birotteau, returning to her room, found her new dress lying there on the bed; the cherry-colored velvet gown, trimmed with lace, which her husband had given her. Virginie had stolen in on tiptoe to lay it there.

"The rooms do you great credit, sir," Constance said, addressing Grindot. "More than a hundred people will be here to-morrow evening, and you will be complimented by everybody."

"I shall recommend you," said César. "You will meet all the first-rate people, and you will be better known in a single evening than if you had built a hundred houses."

Constance, touched by what had happened, no longer thought of the expense or of criticising her husband, and for the following reasons. That morning, when Popinot had brought the "Hero and Leander," he had assured her that the Cephalic Oil would be a success; Constance had always had a high opinion of Popinot's abilities and intelligence, and Popinot was working with unheard-of enthusiasm. The money lavished by Birotteau on these extravagances might amount to a good round sum; but the young lover had promised that, in six months' time, Birotteau's share of the profits on the sales of the oil would cover them. After nineteen years of apprehension, it was so sweet to put doubts aside for a single day; and Constance promised her daughter that she would not spoil her husband's joy by any afterthought, but would give herself up entirely to gladness. So when M. Grindot left them about eleven o'clock, she flung her arms about her husband's neck and shed a few tears of joy.

"Ah, César," she said, "you make me very silly and very happy."

"If it will only last, you mean, do you not?" César asked, smiling.

"It will last; I have no fear now," said Mme. César.

"That is right; you appreciate me at last."

Those who have sufficient greatness of character to know

their weaknesses will confess that a poor orphan girl who, eighteen years ago, had been earning her living behind the counter of the Little Sailor in the Ile Saint-Louis, and a poor peasant lad who had come on foot from Touraine, stick in hand and with hobnailed shoes on his feet, might well feel gratified and happy to give such a fete on an occasion so much to their credit.

"*Mon Dieu*, I would willingly give a hundred francs for a visitor," cried César.

"M. l'Abbé Loraux," announced Virginie, and the Abbé appeared. The priest was at this time curate of Saint-Sulpice. Never has the power of the soul been more plainly revealed than in this reverend ecclesiastic, who left a profound impression on the minds of all those with whom he came in contact. The exercise of Catholic virtues had given sublimity to a harsh face, almost repellent in its ugliness; it was as if something of the light of heaven shone from it before the time. The influences of a simple and sincere life, passing into the blood, had modified those rugged features, the fires of charity had chastened their uncouth outlines. In Claparon's case, the nature of the man had stamped itself on his face and degraded and brutalized it, but here the grace of the three fair human virtues, Hope, Faith, and Charity, hovered about the wrinkled lines. There was a penetrating power in his words, slowly and gently spoken. He dressed like other priests in Paris, and allowed himself a chestnut-brown overcoat. No trace of ambition had sullied the pure heart, which the angels would surely bear to God in its primitive innocence; it had required all the kindly urgency of the daughter of Louis XVI. to induce the Abbé Loraux to accept a benefice in Paris, and then he had taken one of the poorest.

Just now he looked somewhat disquieted as he surveyed all these splendors; he smiled at the three before him, and shook his head.

"Children," he said, "it is my part to comfort those that mourn, and not to be present at festivals. I have come to thank M. César and to congratulate you. There is only one

festival that will bring me here—the marriage of this pretty maid."

A quarter of an hour later the Abbé took his leave, and neither César nor his wife had dared to show him the new arrangements. The sober apparition threw a few drops of cold water on César's joyous ebullitions.

They slept that night amid the new glories, each taking possession of the little luxuries and pretty furniture for which they had longed. Césarine helped her mother to undress before the mirror of the white marble toilet table; César was fain to use his newly-acquired superfluities at once; and the heads of all the three were filled with visions of the joys of the morrow.

The next day, at four o'clock, they had been to mass, and had read vespers; the mezzanine floor had been delivered over to the secular arm, in the shape of Chevet's people, and Césarine and her mother betook themselves to their toilets. Never was costume more becoming to Mme. César than the cherry-colored velvet gown with the lace about it, the short sleeves adorned with lappets; the rich stuff and the glowing color set off the youthful freshness of her shapely arms, the dazzling whiteness of her skin, the gracious outlines of her neck and shoulders. The naïve happiness felt by every woman when she is conscious that she looks at her best lent a vague sweetness to Mme. Birotteau's Grecian profile; and the outlines of her face, finely cut as a cameo, appeared in all their delicate beauty. Césarine, in her white crape dress, with a wreath of white roses in her hair, and a rose at her waist, her shoulders and the outlines of her bodice modestly covered by a scarf, turned Popinot's head.

"These people are eclipsing us," said Mme. Roguin to her husband, as she went through the rooms.

The notary's wife was furious. A woman can always measure the superiority or inferiority of a rival, and Mme. Roguin felt that she was not as beautiful as Mme. César.

"Pooh, not for long. In a little while the poor thing will

be ruined, and your carriage will splash the mud on her as she goes afoot through the streets."

Vauquelin's manner was perfect. He came with M. de Lacépède, who had brought his colleague in his carriage. To Mme. César, in her radiant beauty, the two learned Academicians paid compliments in scientific language.

"You possess the secret, unknown to chemistry, of retaining youth and beauty, madame."

"You are in your own house, so to speak, M. l'Académicien," said Birotteau.—"Yes, M. le Comte," he went on, turning to the Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor, "I owe my success to M. Vauquelin. I have the honor of presenting to your lordship M. le Président (of the Tribunal of Commerce).—That is M. le Comte de Lacépède, a peer of France, and one of the greatest men in France besides; he has written forty volumes," he added, for the benefit of Joseph Lebas, who came with the President.

The guests were punctual. The ordinary tradesman's dinner party followed, abundant in good humor and merriment, and enlivened by the homely jokes that never fail to provoke laughter. Ample justice was done to the excellent dishes, and the wines were thoroughly appreciated. It was half-past nine before they went into the drawing-room for coffee, and cabs had already begun to arrive with impatient dancers. An hour later, the rooms were full, and the dance had become a crush. M. de Lacépède and M. Vauquelin went, in spite of entreaties from César, who followed them despairingly to the staircase. He had better fortune with the elder Popinot and M. de la Billardière, who remained.

With the exception of three women, Mlle. Fontaine, Mme. Jules, and Mme. Rabourdin, who severally represented aristocracy, finance, and official dignities, and by their brilliant beauty, dress, and manner presented a striking contrast to the rest of the assembly, the toilets of the remainder were of the heavy and substantial order, too suggestive of a well-lined purse, which gives to a crowd of citizens' wives and

daughters a certain air of vulgarity, made cruelly prominent in the present case by the daintiness and grace of the three ladies.

The bourgeoisie of the Rue Saint-Denis displayed itself majestically in the full glory of its absurdities carried to the burlesque point. It was that same bourgeoisie, nor more nor less, which tricks its offspring out in the uniform of the Lancers of the National Guard, that buys "Victories and Conquests," "The Old Soldier at the Plow," and admires "The Pauper's Funeral," which rejoices to go on Guard, goes on Sundays to the inevitable country house, is at pains to acquire a distinguished air, and dreams of municipal honors; the bourgeoisie that looks on every one with jealous eyes, and yet is kindly, helpful, devoted, warm-hearted, and compassionate, ready to subscribe for the orphan children of a General Foy, for the Greeks (all unwitting of their piracies), for the Champ d'Asile when it no longer exists; a bourgeoisie that falls a victim to its own good qualities, and is flouted by a social superiority which marks a real inferiority, for an ignorance of social conventions fosters that native kindliness of heart; a bourgeoisie which brings up frank-hearted daughters inured to work, full of good qualities, which are lost at once if they mingle with the classes above them; a common-sense, matter-of-fact womankind, from among whom the worthy Chrysale should have taken a wife; that bourgeoisie, in short, so admirably represented by the Matifats, the druggists in the Rue des Lombards, who had supplied the Queen of Roses for sixty years.

Mme. Matifat, anxious to appear stately, wore a turban on her head, and was dancing in a heavy poppy-red gown embroidered with gold, a toilet that harmonized with a haughty countenance, a Roman nose, and the splendors of a crimson complexion. Even M. Matifat, so glorious when the National Guard was reviewed, when you might see the chain and bunch of seals blazing on his portly person fifty paces away, was obscured by this Catherine II. of the counting-house; yet her short, stout, spectacled consort, with his

shirt collar almost up to his ears, distinguished himself by his deep bass voice and by the richness of his vocabulary.

He never said "Corneille," but "the sublime Corneille." Racine was the "tender Racine"; Voltaire, oh! Voltaire, "takes the second place in every class, more of a wit than a genius, but nevertheless a man of genius!" Rousseau, "a gloomy, suspicious nature, a man overbrimming with pride, who ended by hanging himself." He related tedious stock anecdotes about Piron, who is looked upon as a prodigious personage among the bourgeoisie. There was a slight tendency to obscenity in Matifat's conversation; he was an infatuated admirer of theatrical divinities; and it was even said of him that, in imitation of old Cardot and the wealthy Camusot, he kept a mistress. Now and then Mme. Matifat would hastily interrupt him on the brink of an anecdote by crying, at the top of her voice, "Mind what you are going to tell us, old man!" In familiar conversation she always addressed him as "old man." The voluminous lady of the Rue des Lombards caused Mlle. de Fontaine's aristocratic countenance to lose its repose; the haughty damsel could not help smiling when she overheard Mme. Matifat say to her husband, "Don't make a rush for the ices, old man; it is bad style!"

It is harder to explain the differences which distinguish the great world from the bourgeoisie than it is for the bourgeoisie to efface them. The women, conscious of their toilets, felt that this was a holiday; they made no attempt to conceal an enjoyment which plainly showed that this ball was a great event in their busy lives; while the three women, each of whom represented a different higher social sphere, were at that moment as they would be on the morrow. They did not seem to be dressed for the occasion, had no desire to behold themselves amid the unaccustomed marvels of their costume, and showed no uneasiness as to its effect, which they had ascertained once and for all as they put the last touches to their ball-dresses before the mirror; there was no excitement in their faces; they danced with the grace and ease of move-

ment which the forgotten sculptors of a bygone age caught and recorded in their statues. But the others bore the impress of daily toil, toil showed itself in their attitude, in their exaggerated enjoyment; their glances were naïvely curious, their voices were not subdued to the key of the low murmur which gives such an inimitable piquancy to ballroom conversations; and, above all things, they lacked the impertinent gravity which contains the germ of epigram, the repose of manner which marks those whose self-command is perfect. So Mme. Rabourdin, Mme. Jules, and Mlle. de Fontaine, who had expected infinite amusement from this perfumer's ball, stood out against the background of citizens' wives and daughters, conspicuous by their languid grace, by the exquisite taste displayed in their toilets, and by their manner of dancing, even as three principal performers at the Opéra are set off by the rank and file of supernumeraries on the stage. Jealous and astonished eyes watched them. Mme. Roguin, Constance, and Césarine formed a link, as it were, between these three aristocratic types and the tradesmen's womankind.

At every ball a moment comes when excitement, or the torrents of light, the gayety, the music, and the movement of the dance carries away the dancers, and all the shades of difference are drowned in the *crescendo* of the *tutti*. In a little while the ball would become a romp. Mlle. de Fontaine determined to go; but as she sought the venerable Vendean leader's arm, Birotteau and his wife and daughter hastened to prevent the defection of the aristocracy of their assembly.

"There is a perfume of good taste about the rooms which really surprises me; I congratulate you upon it," said the insolent girl, addressing the perfumer.

Birotteau was too much intoxicated by the compliments publicly addressed to him to understand this speech; but his wife flushed up, and did not know what to answer.

"This is a national festival which does you honor." Camusot said.

"I have seldom seen so fine a ball," said M. de la Billardière, an official fib that cost him nothing.

Birotteau took all the congratulations seriously.

"What a charming sight, and how good the band is! Shall you often give us balls?" asked Mme. Lebas.

"What beautiful rooms! Did you plan them yourself?" inquired Mme. Desmarets, and César ventured on a lie, and allowed it to be thought that he was the originator of the scheme of decoration. Césarine, whose list of partners for the quadrilles was of course filled up, learned how much delicacy there was in Anselme's nature.

"If I only listened to my own wishes," he had said in her ear, as they rose from dinner, "I would entreat the favor of a quadrille with you, but my happiness would cost our self-love too dear."

Césarine, who thought all men who walked straight ungraceful in their gait, determined to open the ball with Popinot. Popinot, encouraged by his aunt, who had bade him be bold, dared to speak of his love during the quadrille to the charming girl at his side, but in the roundabout ways that timid lovers take.

"My fortune depends on you, mademoiselle."

"And how?"

"There is but one hope which can give me the power to make it."

"Then hope."

"Do you really know all that you have said in those two words?" asked Popinot.

"Hope for fortune," said Césarine, with a mischievous smile.

As soon as the quadrille was over, Anselme rushed to his friend. "Gaudissart! Gaudissart! succeed, or I shall blow my brains out." He squeezed his friend's arm in a Herculean grasp. "Success means that I shall marry Césarine. She has told me so; and see how beautiful she is!"

"Yes, she is prettily rigged out," said Gaudissart; "and she is rich. We will do her in oil."

The good understanding between Mlle. Lourdois and Alexandre Crottat (Roguin's successor-designate) did not escape Mme. Birotteau, who could not give up without a pang the prospect of seeing her daughter the wife of a Paris notary. Uncle Pillerault, after exchanging a greeting with little Molineux, took up his quarters in an easy-chair near the bookcase. Hence he watched the card-players, listened to the talk about him, and went from time to time to the door to look at the moving flower-garden as the dancers' heads swayed in the figures of the quadrille. He turned a truly philosophical countenance on it all. The men were unspeakable, with the exception of du Tillet, who had already learned something of the manners of the fashionable world; of young Billardière, an incipient dandy; M. Jules Desmarets, and the official personages. But among the faces, all more or less comical, which gave the assembly its character, there was one in particular, worn into meaningless smoothness like the head on a five-franc piece issued by the Republic, but curious by reason of its association with a suit of clothes. This person, it will have been guessed, was none other than the petty tyrant of the Cour Batave, arrayed in fine linen, yellowed with lying by in the press, displaying a shirt frill of venerable lace, secured by a pin with a bluish cameo. Short breeches of black silk treacherously revealed the spindle shanks on which he dared to repose his weight. César triumphantly took him round the four apartments devised by the architect on the first floor of his house.

"Hey! hey! it is your own affair, sir," said Molineux. "My first floor done up in this way will be worth another thousand crowns."

Birotteau turned this off with a joke, but the little old man's words and tone had been like a prick of a needle. "I shall soon have my first floor again; this man is ruining himself!"—that was the underlying sense of that "*will be worth*," which had been a sudden revelation of Molineux's claws.

The pale, meagre face and cruel eyes struck du Tillet, whose attention had been called to the landlord in the first

instance by the watch-chain from which a pound weight of trinkets hung and jingled, the green coat with white threads in it, and the odd-looking, turned-up collar, which gave the old man somewhat the appearance of a rattlesnake. So the banker went over to the little money-lender to learn how he came to be at a merry-making.

"Here, sir," said Molineux, putting a foot into the boudoir, "I am on M. le Comte de Granville's property, but here" (he pointed to the other foot) "I am on my own, for this house belongs to me."

And Molineux, more than willing to gratify the only one who had a mind to listen to him, was so charmed with du Tillet's attentive attitude that he described himself, and gave an account of his habits, together with a complete history of the sauciness of Master Gendrin, and an exact relation of his transactions with the perfumer, without which transaction the ball would not have taken place.

"Ah! so M. César has paid his rent beforehand," said du Tillet; "nothing is more contrary to his habits."

"Oh! I asked him to do so; I am so accommodating with my tenants!"

"If old Birotteau goes bankrupt," thought du Tillet, "that little rogue will certainly make a capital assignee. Such captiousness is not often met with; he must amuse himself at home, like Domitian, by killing flies when he is alone."

Du Tillet betook himself to the card-tables, where Claparon (by his orders) had already taken his post. Du Tillet thought that, screened by a lamp shade, at *bouillotte*, his dummy-banker would escape all scrutiny. As they sat opposite one another, they looked such perfect strangers that the most suspicious observer could have discovered no sign of an understanding between them. Gaudissart, who knew that Claparon had risen in the world, did not dare to approach him; the wealthy ex-commercial traveller had given him the portentously cool stare of an upstart who does not care to be claimed by an old acquaintance.

Toward five o'clock in the morning the ball came to an

end, like a spent rocket. By that time there only remained some forty cabs out of a hundred or more which had filled the Rue Saint-Honoré; and in the ballroom they were dancing the *boulangère*, which later was succeeded by the cotillon and the English galop. Du Tillet, Roguin, young Cardot, Jules Desmarets, and the Comte de Granville were playing *bouillotte*. Du Tillet had won three thousand francs. The light of the wax-candles was growing pale in the dawn when the card-players rose to join in the last quadrille.

In bourgeois houses, this supreme enjoyment never comes to an end without some enormities. Those who imposed awe or restraint on the others are gone; the intoxication of movement, the hot rooms, the spirits that lurk in the most harmless beverages, relax the stiffness of the dowagers, who allow themselves to be drawn into the quadrilles, and yield to the excitement of the moment; men are heated, the lank hair comes down over their faces, and their grotesque appearance provokes laughter; the younger women grow frivolous, flowers have fallen here and there from their hair. Then is it that the bourgeois Momus enters, followed by his antic crew! Laughter breaks out in peals, and every one gives himself up to the merriment, thinking that with morning labor will resume its sway over him. Matifat was dancing with a woman's hat on his head; Célestin was indulging in burlesque movements. A few of the ladies clapped their hands noisily when they changed the figures of the interminable quadrille.

"How they are enjoying themselves!" said the happy Birotteau.

"If only they break nothing," said Constance, who stood by Uncle Pillerault.

"You have given the most magnificent ball that I have seen, and I have seen many," said du Tillet, with a bow to his late employer.

There is in one of Beethoven's eight symphonies a fantasia like a great poem; it is the culminating point of the

finale of the Symphony in C minor. When, after the slow preparation of the mighty magician, so well understood by Habeneck, the rich curtain rises on this scene; when the bow of the enthusiastic leader of the orchestra calls forth the dazzling *motif*, through which the whole gathered force of the music flows, the poet, as his heart beats fast, will understand that this ball was in Birotteau's life like this moment when his own imagination feels the quickening power of the music, of this *motif*, which in itself perhaps raises the Symphony in C minor above its glorious sisters. For a radiant fairy springs up and waves her wand, and you hear the rustling of the purple silken curtains raised by angels; the golden doors, carved like the bronze gates of the Baptistery in Florence, turn upon their hinges of adamant, and your eyes wander over far-off glories and vistas of fairy palaces. Forms not of this earth glide among them, the incense of prosperity rises, the fire is kindled on the altar of fortune, the scented air circles about it. Beings clad in white blue-bordered tunics smile divinely as they float before your eyes, shapes delicate and ethereal beyond expression turn faces of unearthly beauty upon you. The Loves hover in the air, filling it with the flames of their torches. You feel that you are loved; you are glad with a joy that you drink in without comprehending it as you bathe in the floods of a torrent of harmony which pours out for each the nectar of his choice; for as the music slides into your inmost soul, its desires are realized for a moment. Then when you have walked for a while in heaven, the enchanter plunges you back, by some deep and mysterious transition of the bass, into the morass of chill reality, only to draw you thence when he has awakened in you a thirst for his divine melodies, and your soul cries out to hear those sounds again. The history of the soul at the most glorious point in that beautiful *finale* is the history of the sensations which this festival brought in abundance for Constance and César. But it was no Beethoven, but a Collinet, who had composed upon his flute the *finale* of their commercial symphony.

The three Birotteaus, tired but happy, slept that morning with the sounds of the festival ringing in their ears. The building, repairs, furniture, banquets, toilets, and Césarine's library (for the money had been repaid to her) had altogether raised the expense of that entertainment, without César's having a suspicion of it, to sixty thousand francs. So much did that luckless red ribbon, fastened by the King to a perfumer's buttonhole, cost the wearer. If any misfortune should befall César Birotteau, this extravagance of his was like to bring him into serious trouble at the police court; a merchant lays himself open to a term of two years' imprisonment if, on examination, his expenses are considered excessive. It is, perhaps, more unpleasant to go to the Sixth Chamber for simple bad management or for a foolish trifle, than to come before a Court of Assize for a gigantic fraud; and in some people's eyes it is better to be a knave than a fool.

II

CÉSAR STRUGGLES WITH MISFORTUNE

A WEEK AFTER the ball, that final flare of the straw-fire of a prosperity which had lasted for eighteen years, and now was about to die out in darkness, César stood watching the passers-by through his shop window. He was thinking of the wide extent of his business affairs, and found them almost more than he could manage. Hitherto his life had been quite simple; he manufactured and sold his goods, or he bought to sell again. But now there was the speculation in building land, and his own share in the enterprise of A. Popinot & Company, besides a hundred and sixty thousand francs' worth of bills to meet. Before long he would be compelled to discount some of his customers' bills (and his wife would not like it), or there must be an unheard-of success on Popinot's part; altogether, the poor man had so many things to think of that he felt as if he had more skeins to wind than he could hold.

How would Anselme steer his course? Birotteau treated Popinot much as a professor of rhetoric treats a student; he felt little confidence in his capacity, and was sorry that he could not be always on hand to look after him. The admonitory kick bestowed on Anselme's shins by way of a recommendation to hold his tongue in Vauquelin's presence will illustrate the fears which the perfumer felt as to the newly-started business. Birotteau was very careful to hide his thoughts from his wife and daughter, and from his assistant; but within himself he felt as a Seine boatman might feel if by some freak of fortune a Minister should give him the command of a frigate. Such thoughts as these, rising like a fog in his brain, were but little favorable to clear thinking; he stood, therefore, trying to see things distinctly in his own mind.

Just at that moment a figure, for which he felt an intense aversion, appeared in the street; he beheld his second landlord, little Molineux. Everybody knows those dreams in which events are so crowded together that we pass through a whole lifetime, dreams in which a fantastical being reappears from time to time, always as the bearer of bad tidings—the villain of the piece. It seemed to Birotteau that fate had sent Molineux to play a similar part in his waking life. That countenance had grinned diabolically at him when the feast was at its height, and had turned an evil eye on the splendor; and now when César saw it again, he remembered the impression which the "little curmudgeon" (to use his own expression) had given him but so much the more vividly, because Molineux had given him a fresh feeling of repulsion by suddenly breaking in upon his musings.

"Sir," said the little man in his vampire's voice, "we did this business in such an offhand fashion, that you forgot to approve the additions to this little private covenant of ours."

As Birotteau took up the lease to repair the omission, the architect came in, bowed to the perfumer, and hovered about him with a diplomatic air.

"You know, sir, the difficulties at the outset when you

are starting in business," he said at last in Birotteau's ear; "you are satisfied with me; you would oblige me very much by paying my honorarium at once."

Birotteau, who had paid away all his ready money and emptied his portfolio, told Célestin to draw a bill for two thousand francs at three months and a form of receipt.

"It is a very lucky thing for me that you undertook to pay the quarter which your next door neighbor owed," said Molineux, with malicious cunning in his smile. "My porter has been round to tell me that the authorities have been affixing seals to his property, because Master Cayron has disappeared from the scene."

"If only they don't come down on me for the five thousand francs!" thought Birotteau.

"People thought that he was doing very well," said Lourdois, who had just come in to hand his statement to the perfumer.

"No one in business is quite safe from reverses until he retires," remarked little Molineux, folding up his document with punctilious neatness.

The architect watched the little old creature with the pleasure that every artist feels at the sight of a living caricature which confirms his prejudices against the bourgeoisie.

"When you hold an umbrella over your head, you generally suppose that it is sheltered if it rains," he observed.

Molineux looked harder at the architect's mustache and "royale" than at his face, and the contempt that he felt for Grindot quite equalled Grindot's contempt for him. He stayed on to give the architect a parting scratch. By dint of living with his cats, there had come to be something feline in Molineux's ways as well as in his eyes.

Just at that moment, Ragon and Pillerault came in together.

"We have been talking over this business with the judge," Ragon said in César's ear. "He says that in a speculation of this kind we must actually complete the purchase and have a receipt from the vendors if we are really to be severally propriet—"

"Oh! are you in the affair of the Madeleine?" asked Lourdois. "People are talking about it; there will be houses to build!"

The house-painter had come to ask for a prompt settlement, but he found it to his interest not to press the perfumer.

"I have sent in my statement because it is the end of the year," he said in a low voice for César's benefit; "I do not want anything."

"Well, what is it, César?" asked Pillerault, noticing his nephew's surprise; for César, overcome by the sight of the statement, made no answer to either Ragon or Lourdois.

"Oh! a trifle; I took five thousand francs of bills from a neighbor, the umbrella dealer, who is bankrupt. If he has given me bad paper, I shall be caught like a simpleton."

"Why, I told you so long ago," cried Ragon; "a drowning man will catch hold of his father's leg to save himself, and drag him down with him. I have seen so much of bankruptcies! A man is not exactly a rogue to begin with; but when he gets into trouble, he is forced to become one."

"True," said Pillerault.

"Ah! if I ever get as far as the Chamber of Deputies, or have some influence with Government . . ." said Birotteau, rising on tiptoe, and sinking back again on his heels.

"What will you do?" asked Lourdois. "You are a wise man."

Molineux, always interested by a discussion on law, stayed in the shop to listen; and as the attention paid by others is infectious, Pillerault and Ragon, who knew César's opinion, listened none the less with as much gravity as the three strangers.

"I should have a Tribunal and a permanent bench of judges," said César, "and a public prosecutor for criminal cases. After an examination, made by a judge who should discharge the functions of agents by procuration trustees and registrar, the trader should be declared *temporarily insolvent* or a *fraudulent bankrupt*. In the first case, he should be

bound over to pay his creditors in full; to that end, he should be trustee for his own and his wife's property (for everything he had, or might inherit, would belong to his creditors); he should manage his estate for their benefit and under their inspection; in fact, he should carry on the business for them, signing his name, in every case, as 'such a one, in liquidation,' until everybody was paid in full. But if he were made a bankrupt, he should be condemned to stand in the pillory in the Exchange for a couple of hours, as they used to do, with a green cap on his head. His own property and his wife's, and his interest in any other estate, should be forfeit to his creditors, and he should be banished the kingdom."

"Business would be a little safer," said Lourdois; "people would think twice before going into a speculation."

"The law as it stands is never carried out," cried César, lashing himself up; "more than fifty merchants out of a hundred could only pay seventy-five per cent, or they sell goods at twenty-five per cent below invoice price, and spoil trade in that way."

"M. Birotteau is in the right," said Molineux; "the law allows far too much latitude. The entire estate should be made over to the creditors, or the man should be disgraced."

"Bother take it," said César, "at the rate at which things are going, a merchant will become a licensed robber. By signing his name he can dip in any one's purse."

"You are severe, M. Birotteau," said Lourdois.

"He is right," said old Ragon.

"Every man who fails is a suspicious character," César went on, exasperated by the little loss which rang in his ears; it was like the huntsman's first distant halloo to a stag.

As he spoke, Chevet's steward brought his invoice, a pastry-cook's boy from Félix and the Café Foy arrived, together with the clarinet-player of Collinet's band, each with an account.

"The *Quart d'heure de Rabelais*," smiled Ragon.

"My word, that was a splendid fete of yours," said Lourdois.

"I am busy," César said, and the messengers departed, leaving their invoices.

"M. Grindot," said Lourdois, who noticed that the architect was folding up a bill which bore César's signature, "you will check my account and see that it is all in order; you need do nothing more than run through it, all the prices have been agreed to on M. Birotteau's behalf."

Pillerault looked at Lourdois and Grindot.

"If architect and contractor settle the prices between them, you are being robbed," he said in his nephew's ear.

Grindot went out. Molineux followed and came up to him with a mysterious expression.

"Sir," he remarked, "you heard what I said, but you did not take my meaning; I wish you an umbrella when it comes on to rain."

Fear seized on Grindot. A man clings all the more tightly to gain which is not lawfully his; such is human nature. As a matter of fact, too, this had been a labor of love for the artist; he had given all his time and his utmost skill to the alterations of the rooms; he had done five times as much as he had been paid for, and had fallen a victim to his own self-love. The contractors had had little difficulty in tempting him. And besides the irresistible argument, there was a menace, understood though not expressed, of doing him an injury by slandering him, and there was a yet more cogent reason for yielding—the remark that Lourdois made as to the building land near the Madeleine. Clearly, Birotteau did not mean to put up a single house; he was only speculating in land.

Architects and contractors are in somewhat the same relative positions as actors and dramatists; they are dependent on each other. Grindot, to whom Birotteau left the settlement of the charges, was for the handicraftsman as against the citizen-householder. So the end of it was that three large contractors—Lourdois, Chaffaroux, and Thorien the carpenter—declared him to be "one of those good fellows for whom it is a pleasure to work." Grindot foresaw that

the accounts on which he was to have his share would be paid, like his own fee, by bills; and this little old man had given him doubts as to whether those bills would be met. Grindot was prepared to show no mercy; after the manner of artists, the most ruthless enemies of the bourgeois.

By the end of December, César had invoices for sixty thousand francs. Félix, the Café Foy, Tanrade, and others, to whom small amounts were owing which must be paid in cash, had sent three times for the money. In business these small trifles do more harm than a heavy loss; they set rumors in circulation. A loss which every one knows is a definite thing, but panic knows no limits. Birotteau's safe was empty.

Then fear seized on the perfumer. Such a thing had never happened before in his business career. Like all people who have almost forgotten their struggles with poverty, and have little strength of character, this incident, a daily occurrence in the lives of most petty shopkeepers in Paris, troubled César's brain.

He told Célestin to send in invoices to his own customers; such an unheard-of order had to be repeated twice before the astonished first assistant understood it. The "clients"—the grand name that shopkeepers used to apply to their customers, and retained by César in speaking of them, in spite of his wife, who had yielded at last with a "Call them what you like, so long as they pay us"—the "clients" were wealthy people, who paid when they pleased; in César's business there were no bad debts, though the outstanding accounts often amounted to fifty or sixty thousand francs. The second assistant took the invoice-book, and began to copy out the largest amounts. César stood in fear of his wife. He did not wish her to see his prostration beneath the simoom of misfortune, so he determined to go out.

"Good-day, sir," said Grindot, coming in with the careless air that artists assume when they talk of business matters, to which they say they are entirely unaccustomed. "I cannot obtain ready money of any sort or description for your paper,

so I am compelled to ask you to give me cash instead. It is a most unfortunate thing for me that I must take this step; but I have not been to the money-lenders about it; I should not like to hawk your name about; I know enough of business to know that it would be casting a slur on it; so it is to your own interest to—"

"Speak lower, sir, if you please," said Birotteau in bewilderment. "I am very much surprised at this."

Lourdois came in.

"Here, Lourdois," said Birotteau with a smile, "do you know about this?—" he stopped short. With the good faith of a merchant who feels secure, the poor man had been about to ask Lourdois to take Grindot's bill, by way of laughing at the architect; but he saw a cloud on Lourdois's brow, and trembled at his own imprudence. The harmless joke was the death-knell of a credit not above suspicion. In such a case a rich merchant takes back his bill; he does not offer it. Birotteau felt dizzy; it was as if a stroke of a pickaxe had laid open the pit which yawned at his feet.

"My dear M. Birotteau," said Lourdois, retiring with him to the back of the shop, "my account has been checked and passed; I must ask you to have the money ready for me by to-morrow. My daughter is going to be married to young Crottat; he wants money, and notaries will not wait and bargain; besides, no one has ever seen my name on a bill."

"You can send round the day after to-morrow," said Birotteau stiffly (he counted on the payment of the invoices). —"And you also, sir"—he spoke to Grindot.

"Why can I not have it at once?" asked the architect.

"I have my men's wages to pay in the Faubourg," said César, who had never told a lie.

He took up his hat to go with them; but the bricklayer came in with Thorien and Chaffaroux, and stopped him just as he shut the door.

"We really want the money, sir," said Chaffaroux.

"Eh! I haven't the wealth of the Indies," cried César, out of patience; and he quickly put a hundred paces between

himself and the three visitors.—"There is something underneath all this. Confound the ball! Everybody takes you for a millionnaire. Still, there was something very strange about Lourdois," he thought; "there is some snake in the hedge."

He went along the Rue Saint-Honoré without thinking where he was going, feeling at a very low ebb, when at a corner of the street he ran up against Alexandre Crottat, like a battering-ram, or as one mathematician absorbed in the working of a problem might collide with another.

"Ah! sir," exclaimed the future notary, "one word with you! Did Roguin pay over your four hundred thousand francs to M. Claparon?"

"You were there when the thing was done. M. Claparon gave me no receipt of any kind; my bills were to be negotiated. . . . Roguin ought to have paid them to him . . . my two hundred and forty thousand francs in coin. . . . He was told that the money was to be paid down and the transaction completed. . . . M. Popinot of the Tribunal says. . . . The vendor's receipt! . . . But . . . what makes you ask the question?"

"What makes me ask you such a question? To know whether your two hundred thousand francs are in Claparon's hands or Roguin's. Roguin is such an old acquaintance of yours that he might have scrupled to take your money, and handed it over to Claparon; if so, you will have had a narrow escape! But how stupid I am! He has made off with them, for he has M. Claparon's money; luckily, Claparon had only paid a hundred thousand francs. Roguin has absconded; I myself paid him a hundred thousand francs for his practice without taking a receipt; I gave it him as I might give my purse to you to keep for me. Your vendors have not been paid a stiver; they have just been round to see me. The money you raised on your land has no existence for you, nor for the man of whom you borrowed it; Roguin had swallowed it like your hundred thousand francs; which er—he has not had this long while. And he has taken your last

payment of a hundred thousand francs with him too; I remember going to the bank for the money."

The pupils of César's eyes dilated so widely that he could see nothing but red flames before him.

"Your draft on the bank for a hundred thousand francs, a hundred thousand francs of mine paid for the practice, and a hundred thousand francs belonging to M. Claparon—three hundred thousand francs gone like smoke, to say nothing of the defalcations that have yet to be found out," the young notary went on. "They feared for Mme. Roguin's life; M. du Tillet spent the night beside her. Du Tillet himself has had a narrow escape! Roguin has been pestering him this month past to draw him into the Madeleine speculation, but, luckily, all his capital was locked up in some project of the Nucingens. Roguin wrote his wife a frightful letter. I have just seen it. For five years he has been gambling with his clients' money, and why? To spend it on a mistress—La belle Hollandaise; he left her a fortnight before he made this stroke. She had squandered till she had not a farthing; her furniture was sold; she had put her name on bills of exchange. Then she hid from her creditors in a house in the Palais-Royal, and was murdered there last evening by an officer in the army. Heaven soon dealt the punishment to her who, beyond a doubt, had run through Roguin's fortune. There are women to whom nothing is sacred; think of squandering away a notary's practice!

"Mme. Roguin will have nothing except what has been secured to her by her legal mortgage, and all the scoundrel's property has been mortgaged beyond its value. The practice is to be sold for three hundred thousand francs! And I, who thought I was doing a good stroke of business, must begin by paying an extra hundred thousand francs for my practice; I hold no receipt; and there are defalcations which will eat up the value of the practice and the deposit of caution-money. The creditors will think that I am in it if I say anything about my hundred thousand francs, and you have to be very careful of your reputation when you are

beginning for yourself.—You will hardly get thirty per cent. Such a brew to drink of at my age! That a man of fifty-nine should take up with a woman. . . . The old rogue! Three weeks ago he told me not to marry Césarine, and said that before long you would not have bread to eat, the monster!"

Alexandre might have talked on for a long while; Birotteau stood like a man turned to stone. Each sentence fell like a stunning blow. He heard nothing in the sounds but his death-knell; just as when Alexandre first began to speak he had seemed to see his own house in flames. He looked so white, and stood so motionless, that Alexandre Crottat, who had taken the worthy perfumer for a clear-headed, capable man of business, was frightened at last. Roguin's successor did not know that this stroke had swept away César's whole fortune. A swift thought of suicide flashed through the brain of the merchant, so profoundly religious by nature. In such a case suicide is a way of escape from a thousand deaths, and it seems logical to accept but one. Alexandre Crottat lent his arm, and tried to walk with him, but it was impossible—César tottered as if he had been drunk.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" asked Crottat. "My good M. César, pluck up heart a little! It takes more than this to kill a man! Besides, you will recover forty thousand francs; the man who loaned you the money had not the money to loan, and did not pay it over to you; you might plead that the contract was void."

"My ball.—My Cross.—Two hundred thousand francs' worth of my paper on the market and nothing in the safe—The Ragons, Pillerault— And my wife, who saw it all!"

A shower of confused words, which called up ideas that overwhelmed him and caused unspeakable pangs, fell like hail laying waste the flower beds of the Queen of Roses.

"If only my head were cut off," Birotteau cried at last; "it is so heavy that it weighs me down, and it is good for nothing in this . . ."

"Poor old Birotteau!" said Alexandre; "then are you in difficulties?"

"Difficulties!"

"Very well, keep up your heart and struggle with them."

"Struggle!" echoed the perfumer.

"Du Tillet used to be your assistant; he has a level head, he will help you."

"Du Tillet?"

"Come along!"

"Good heavens! I don't like to go home like this," cried Birotteau. "You that are my friend, if friends there are, you who have dined with me, you in whom I have taken an interest, call a cab for me, for my wife's sake; and come with me, Xandrot . . ."

With no little difficulty Crottat put the inert mechanism, called César, into a cab.

"Xandrot," he said, in a voice broken with tears, for the tears had begun to fall, and the iron band about his head seemed to be loosened a little, "let us call at the shop. Speak to Célestin for me. My friend, tell him that it is a matter of life and death for me and for my wife. And let no one prattle about Roguin's disappearance on any pretext whatever. Ask Césarine to come down, and beg her to allow no one to say anything about it to her mother. You must beware of your best friends, Pillerault, the Ragons, everybody—"

The change in Birotteau's voice made a deep impression on Crottat, who understood the importance of the request. On their way to the magistrate, they stopped at the house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Célestin and Césarine were horrified to see Birotteau lying back in white and speechless hebetude, as it were, in the cab.

"Keep the affair a secret for me," said the perfumer.

"Ah!" said Xandrot to himself, "he is coming round; I thought it was all over with him."

The conference between Alexandre and the magistrate lasted long. The President of the Chamber of Notaries was sent for; César was taken hither and thither like a parcel; he did not stir, he did not utter a word. Toward seven

o'clock in the evening Alexandre Crottat took the perfumer home again, and the thought of appearing before his wife had a bracing effect on César. The young notary had the charity to precede him, to tell Mme. Birotteau that her husband had had a sort of fit.

"His ideas are confused," he said, making a gesture to describe a bewildered state of the brain; "perhaps he should be bled, or leeches ought to be put on him."

"I knew how it would be," said Constance—nothing was further from her thoughts than the actual disaster—"he did not take his medicine as usual at the beginning of winter, and for these two months he has been working like a galley slave, as if he had to earn his daily bread."

So César's wife and daughter begged him to go to bed, and Dr. Haudry, Birotteau's doctor, was sent for. Old Haudry was a doctor of the school of Molière; he had a large practice, and adhered to old-fashioned methods and out-of-date formulæ; consulting-physician though he was, he drugged his patients like any quack doctor. He came, made his diagnosis, and ordered the immediate application of a sinapism to the soles of César's feet; he detected symptoms of cerebral congestion.

"What can have brought it on?" asked Constance.

"The damp weather," said the doctor. Césarine had given him a hint.

A doctor is often obliged professionally to talk nonsense with a learned air, to save the honor or the life of persons in health who stand about the patient's bed. The old physician had seen so much that half a word sufficed for him. Césarine went out on to the stairs to ask about the treatment.

"Rest and quiet; then, when there is less pressure on the head, we will venture on tonics."

For two days Mme. César sat by her husband's bedside. Often she thought that he was delirious. As he lay in his wife's pretty blue chamber, he said many things, which were enigmas for Constance, at the sight of the hangings, the furniture, and the costly magnificence of the room.

"He is light-headed," she said to Césarine, when César sat upright in bed and began solemnly to repeat scraps of the Code. "If the personal or household expenses are considered excessive . . . Take away those curtains!" he cried.

After three dreadful days of anxiety for César's reason, the Tourangeau's strong peasant constitution triumphed, the pressure on the brain ceased. M. Haudry ordered cordials and a strengthening diet, and after a cup of coffee seasonably administered, César was on his feet again. Constance, worn out, took her husband's place.

"Poor thing!" said César, when he saw her sleeping.

"Come, papa, take courage! You have so much talent that you will triumph over this. Never mind. M. Anselme will help you," and Césarine murmured the sweet, vague words, made still sweeter by tenderness, which put courage into the most sorely defeated, as a mother's crooning songs soothe the pain of a teething infant.

"Yes, child, I will struggle. But not a word of this to any one whatever; not to Popinot, who loves us, nor to your uncle. In the first place, I will write to my brother; he is a canon, I believe, a priest attached to a cathedral. He spends nothing, so he must have saved something. Five thousand francs put by every year for twenty years—he ought to have a hundred thousand francs. Priests have credit in country places."

Césarine, in her hurry to set a little table and the necessaries for writing a letter before her father, brought the remainder of the rose-colored cards for the ball.

"Burn them all!" cried the merchant. "The devil alone could have put the notion of that ball into my head. If I fail, it will look as if I were a rogue. Come, let us go straight to the point."

César's Letter to François Birotteau

"My dear Brother—My business is passing through a crisis so difficult that I implore you to send me all the

money at your disposal, even if you are obliged to borrow.—Yours truly, CÉSAR.

"Your niece Césarine, who is with me as I write this letter, while my poor wife is asleep, desires to be remembered to you, and sends her love."

This postscript was added at Césarine's instance. She gave the letter to Raguet.

"Father," said she, when she came up again, "here is M. Lebas, who wants to speak to you."

"M. Lebas!" cried César, starting as though misfortune had made a criminal of him, "a judge!"

"Dear M. Birotteau," said the stout merchant-draper as he came in, "I take too deep an interest in you—knowing each other so long as we have, and being elected judges together, as we were, for the first time—not to let you know that one Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, has bills of yours made payable to his order, *without guarantee*, by the firm of Claparon. Those two words are not merely an insult; they give a fatal shake to your credit."

"M. Claparon would like to speak with you," said Célestin, putting in his head; "am I to show him up?"

"We shall soon hear the why and wherefore of this affront," remarked Lebas.

"This is M. Lebas, sir," said César, as Claparon came in; "he is a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and my friend—"

"Oh! the gentleman is M. Lebas, is he?" said Claparon, interrupting César, "delighted to make his acquaintance; M. Lebas of the Tribunal, there are so many Lebas, to say nothing of the *hauts* and the *bas*—"

"He has seen the bills which I gave to you, and which (so you told me) should not be negotiated," Birotteau went on, interrupting the rattle in his turn; "he has seen them with the words 'without guarantee' written upon them."

"Well," said Claparon, "and as a matter of fact they will not be negotiated; they are in the hands of a man with whom

I do a great deal of business—old Bidault. That is why I put 'without guarantee' on them. If the bills had been meant to be put in circulation, you would have made them to his order in the first place. M. Lebas, as a judge, will understand my position. What do the bills represent? The price of some landed property. To be paid by whom? By Birotteau. Why, would you have me guarantee Birotteau by my signature? We must, each of us, pay our share of the aforesaid price. Now, isn't it enough to be jointly and severally responsible to the vendors? I have made an inflexible rule in business: I no more give my signature for nothing than I give a receipt for money that is still to be paid. I assume the worst. Who signs, pays. I don't want to be laid open to pay three times over."

"Three times," said César.

"Yes, sir," said Claparon. "I have already guaranteed Birotteau to the vendors; why should I guarantee him again to the bill-discounter? Our case is a hard one; Roguin goes off with a hundred thousand francs of mine; so, even now, my half of the land is costing me five hundred thousand instead of four. Roguin has taken two hundred and forty thousand francs belonging to Birotteau. What would you do in my place, M. Lebas? Put yourself in my shoes. I have not the honor of being known to you, any more than I know M. Birotteau. Do you take me? We go halves in a business speculation. You pay down all your share of the money in cash; and as for me, I give bills for my share. I offer you the bills, and out of excessive benevolence you take them and give money for them. You learn that Claparon the rich banker, looked up to by every one—I accept all the virtues in the world—that the virtuous Claparon is in difficulties for a matter of six millions; would you select that moment to give your name as a guarantee for mine? You would be mad! Well, now, M. Lebas, Birotteau is in the position in which I imagined Claparon to be. Don't you see that in that case, being jointly and severally responsible, I may be made to pay the purchasers; that I can be called

upon to pay a second time for Birotteau's share to the extent of his bills, that is, if I back them, without having—"

"Pay whom?" interrupted the perfumer.

"Without having his half of the land," pursued Claparon, heedless of the interruption, "for I should have no hold on him; so I should have to buy it over again. So—I might pay three times over."

"Repay whom?" insisted Birotteau.

"Why, the holder of the bills; if I indorsed them, and you came to grief."

"I shall not fail, sir," said Birotteau.

"All right," said Claparon. "You have been a judge, you are a clever man of business, you know that we ought to provide for all contingencies, so do not be astonished if I act in a business-like way."

"M. Claparon is right," said Joseph Lebas.

"I am right," continued Claparon, "right from a business point of view. But this is a question of landed property. Now, what ought I myself to receive?—Money, for the vendors must be paid in coin. Let us set aside the two hundred and forty thousand francs, which M. Birotteau will find, I am sure," said Claparon, looking at Lebas. "I came to ask you for the trifling sum of twenty-five thousand francs," he added, looking at Birotteau.

"Twenty-five thousand francs!" cried César, and it seemed to him that the blood turned to ice in his veins. "But, sir, what for?"

"Eh! my dear sir, we are bound to sign, seal, and deliver the deeds in the presence of a notary. Now, as to paying for the land, we may arrange that among ourselves, but when the Treasury comes in—your humble servant! The Treasury does not amuse itself with idle words; it allows you credit from your hand to your pocket, and we shall have to come down with the money—forty-four thousand francs this week in law expenses. I was far from expecting reproaches when I came here; for, thinking that you might find it inconvenient to pay twenty-five thousand

francs, I was going to tell you that by the merest chance I had saved for you—"

"What?" asked Birotteau, giving in that word that cry of distress which no man can mistake.

"A trifle! Twenty-five thousand francs in bills given to you by one and another, which Roguin gave me to discount. I have credited you with the amount as against the registration and other expenses; I will send you the account; there is a little matter to deduct for discounting them, and six or seven thousand francs will still be owing to me."

"This all seems to me to be perfectly fair," said Lebas. "In the place of this gentleman, who appears to me to understand business very well, I should act the same toward a stranger."

"This will not be the death of M. Birotteau," said Claparon; "it takes more than one blow to kill an old wolf; I have seen wolves with bullets in their heads running about like—Lord, yes, like wolves."

"Who could have foreseen such rascality on Roguin's part?" asked Lebas, as much alarmed by César's dumbness as by so vast a speculation outside the perfumery trade.

"A little more, and I should have given this gentleman a receipt for four hundred thousand francs," said Claparon, "and I was in a stew. I had paid over a hundred thousand francs to Roguin the night before. Our mutual confidence saved me. It would have seemed to us all a matter of indifference whether the money should be lying at his office or in my possession till the day when the contracts were completed."

"It would have been much better if each had deposited his money with the Bank of France till the time came for paying it over," said Lebas.

"Roguin was as good as the Bank, I thought," said César. "But he too is in this business," he added, looking at Claparon.

"Yes, for a fourth, and in name only," answered Claparon. "After the imbecility of allowing him to go off with

my money, there is but one thing more out-and-out idiotic —and that would be to make him a present of some more. If he sends me back my hundred thousand francs, and two hundred thousand more on his own account, then we will see! But he will take good care not to put the money into an affair that must simmer for four years before you have a spoonful of soup. If he has only gone off with three hundred thousand francs, as they say, he will want quite fifty thousand livres a year to live decently abroad."

"The bandit!"

"Eh! goodness! An infatuation for a woman brought Roguin to that pass," said Claparon. "What man at his age can answer for it that he will not be mastered and carried away by a last fancy? Not one of us, sober as we are, can tell where it will end. A last love is the most violent. Look at Cardot, and Camusot, and Matifat—every one of them has a mistress! And if all of us are gulled, is it not our own fault? How was it that we did not suspect a notary who speculated on his own account? Any notary, any billbroker, or stockbroker who does business on his own account, is not to be trusted. Failure for them is fraudulent bankruptcy; they are sent up to the Court of Assize for trial; so, of course, they prefer a foreign court. I shall not make that blunder again. Well, well, we are all too weak to pass judgment by default on a man with whom we have dined, who has given grand balls, a man in society, in fact! Nobody complains; it is wrong."

"Very wrong," said Birotteau. "The provisions of the law with regard to liquidations and insolvency ought to be revised throughout."

"If you should happen to need me," said Lebas, addressing Birotteau, "I am quite at your service."

"M. Birotteau has need of no one," said the indefatigable prattler (du Tillet had opened the sluices after pouring in the water, and Claparon was repeating a lesson which du Tillet had very skilfully taught him). "His position is clear. Roguin's estate will pay a dividend of fifty

per cent, from what young Crottat tells me. Besides the dividend, M. César will come by the forty thousand francs which the lender on the mortgage did not pay over; he can raise more money on his property; and we have four months in which to pay two hundred thousand francs to the vendors. Between now and then M. Birotteau will meet his bills (for he ought not to reckon on meeting them with the money which Roguin made off with). But if M. Birotteau should find himself a little pinched . . . well, with one or two accommodation bills, he will pull through."

The perfumer took heart as he listened. Claparon analyzed the business, summed it up, and traced out a plan of action, as it were, for him. Gradually his expression grew decided and resolute, and he conceived a great respect for the ex-commercial traveller's business capacity. Du Tillet had thought it expedient to make Claparon believe that he was one of Roguin's victims. He had given Claparon a hundred thousand francs to give to Roguin, who returned them to du Tillet. Claparon, being uneasy, played his part to the life; he told anybody who cared to listen to him that Roguin had mulcted him of a hundred thousand francs. Du Tillet doubted Claparon's strength of mind; he fancied that principles of honesty and conscientious scruples still lingered in his puppet, and would not confide the whole of his plans to him; he knew, moreover, that his instrument was incapable of guessing at them.

A day came when his commercial go-between reproached him. "If our first friend is not our first dupe, we should never find a second," said du Tillet, and he broke in pieces the tool which was no longer useful.

M. Lebas and Claparon went out together, and Birotteau was left alone.

"I can pull through," he said to himself. "My liabilities, in the shape of bills to be met, amount to two hundred and thirty-five thousand francs. That is to say—seventy-five thousand francs for the house, and a hundred and seventy-five thousand francs for the building-land. Now, to

cover this, I have Roguin's dividend, which will amount may be to a hundred thousand francs; and I can cancel the loan on my land, that is a hundred and forty thousand francs in all. The thing to be done is to make a hundred thousand francs by the Cephalic Oil; and a few accommodation bills, or a loan from a banker, will tide me over until I can make good the loss, and the building-land reaches its enhanced value."

When a man in misfortune once can weave a romance of hope out of the more or less solid reasonings with which he fills the pillow on which he lays his head, he is often saved. Many a one has taken the confidence given by an illusion for energy.—Perhaps the half of courage is really hope, and the Catholic religion reckons hope among the virtues. Has not hope buoyed up many a weakling, giving him time to await the chances which life brings?

Birotteau made up his mind to apply, in the first place, to his wife's uncle, and to disclose his position to his relative before going elsewhere. He went down the Rue Saint-Honoré and reached the Rue Bourdonnais, not without experiencing inward pangs, which caused such violent internal disturbance that he thought his health was deranged. There was a fire in his vitals. As a matter of fact, those whose sentience is keenest in the diaphragm suffer in that region; just as those whose faculty of perception resides in the brain suffer in the head. In grave crises, the system is attacked at the point where the temperament locates the seat of life in the individual; weaklings have the colic, a Napoleon grows drowsy.

Before a man of honor can storm a confidence and overleap the barriers of pride, he must have felt the prick of the spur of Necessity, that hard rider, more than once. So for two days Birotteau had borne that spurring before he went to see Pillerault, and then family reasons decided him—however things might go, he must explain the position to the stern ironmonger. Yet, for all that, when he reached the door, he felt in his inmost soul as a child feels on a visit to the dentist, that his courage was sinking away; and Birot-

teau was not about to face a momentary pang, he quailed before a whole lifetime to come. Slowly he went up the stairs, and found the old man reading the "Constitutionnel" by the fireside; on a little round table his frugal breakfast was set—a roll, butter, Brie cheese, and a cup of coffee.

"There is real wisdom," said Birotteau to himself, and he envied his uncle's life.

"Well," said Pillerault, laying down his spectacles, "I heard about Roguin's affair yesterday at the Café David; so his mistress, La belle Hollandaise, is murdered! I hope that, warned by us who want to be actual proprietors, you have been to Claparon and taken a receipt?"

"Alas! uncle, that is just it; you have laid your finger on the spot. No."

"Oh, bother! you are ruined," said Pillerault, dropping his paper; and Birotteau picked it up, although it was the "Constitutionnel."

This thought was such a shock, that Pillerault's stern features, always like a profile on a coin, grew hard as if they had been struck in bronze. He stared with steady eyes that saw nothing, through the windows, at the opposite wall, and listened while Birotteau poured out a long discourse. Evidently while he heard he deliberated; he was pondering the case with the inflexibility of a Minos who crossed the Styx of commerce, when he left the Quai des Morfondus for his little third-floor dwelling.

"Well, uncle?" asked Birotteau at last, expecting some answer to a final entreaty to sell *rentes* worth sixty thousand francs a year.

"Well, my poor nephew, I cannot do it. Things have gone too far. We, the Ragons and I, shall both lose fifty thousand francs. It was by my advice that the good folk sold their shares in the Wortschin Mines. I feel myself bound, if they lose the money, not to replace their capital, but to give them a helping hand, and to help my niece and Césarine. You might perhaps all of you want bread, and you must come to me—"

"Bread, uncle?"

"Well, yes, bread. Just look the facts in the face: *you will not pull through!* Out of five thousand six hundred francs a year, I will set aside four thousand to divide between you and the Ragons. When your disaster comes, I know Constance, she will slave and deny herself everything—and so will you, César!"

"There is hope yet, uncle."

"I do not see it as you do."

"I will prove the contrary."

"Nothing would please me better."

Birotteau went without an answer for Pillerault. He had come to find comfort and encouragement, he had received a second blow; a blow less heavy than the first one, it is true; but whereas the first had been dealt at his head, this thrust had gone to his heart, and the poor man's life lay in his affections. He had gone down part of the way, and then he turned and went up again.

"Sir," he said, in a constrained voice, "Constance knows nothing of this, keep the secret for me at least; and beg the Ragons not to disturb the peace that I need if I am to fight against misfortune."

Pillerault made a sign of assent.

"Take courage, César," he said. "I see that you are angry with me, but some day you will acknowledge that I am right, when you think of your wife and daughter."

Discouraged by this opinion given by his uncle, whose clear-headedness he acknowledged, César suddenly dropped from the heights of hope into the miry slough of uncertainty. When a man's affairs take an ugly turn like this, he is apt to become the plaything of circumstances, unless he is of Pillerault's temper; he follows other people's ideas, or his own, much as a wayfarer pursues a will-o'-the-wisp. He allows himself to be swept away by the whirlwind when he should either lie prostrate with his eyes shut, and let it pass over him, or rise and watch the direction that it takes, to escape the blast. In the midst of his anguish, Birotteau

bethought himself of the necessary steps to be taken with regard to his loan. He went to see Derville, a consulting barrister in the Rue Vivienne, so as to set about it the sooner, if Derville should see any chance of cancelling the contract. Him he found sitting, wrapped in his white flannel dressing-gown, by the fireside, staid and self-possessed, as is the wont of men of law, accustomed as they are to the most harrowing disclosures. Birotteau felt, as a new thing in his experience, this necessary coolness; it was like ice to an excited man like Birotteau telling the story of his misfortunes, smarting from the wounds that he had received, stricken with the fever induced by the risks his fortunes were running, and cruelly beset, since honor and life and wife and child were all imperilled.

"If it is proved," said Derville, when he had heard him out, "that the lender no longer had in Roguin's keeping the sum of money which Roguin induced you to borrow of him, as there has been no transfer of the actual money, the contract might be annulled, and the lender will have his remedy (as you also will have for your hundred thousand francs) in Roguin's caution-money. In that case, I will answer for your lawsuit, so far as it is possible to answer for any action at law, for no action is a foregone conclusion."

The opinion of so learned an expert put a little heart into Birotteau. He begged Derville to obtain a judgment within a fortnight. The advocate answered to the effect that Birotteau might be obliged to wait three months before the contract would be annulled.

"Three months!" cried Birotteau, who thought that he had found an expedient for raising money at once.

"Well, if you yourself succeed in gaining a prompt hearing for your case, we cannot hurry your opponent to suit your pace; he will take advantage of the delays of procedure; advocates are not always at the Palais; who knows but that the other party will let judgment go against him by default? And he will appeal. You can't set your own pace, my dear sir!" said Derville, smiling.

"But at the Tribunal of Commerce—"

"Oh!" said the advocate, "the Consular Tribunal is one thing, and the Tribunal of First Instance is another. You do things in a slashing way over yonder. Now, at the Palais de Justice there are formalities to be gone through. These formalities are the bulwarks of Justice. How would you like it if a demand for forty thousand francs was suddenly fired off at you? Well, your opponent, who will see that amount compromised, will dispute it. Delays are the *chevaux-de-frise* of the law."

"You are right," said Birotteau, and he took leave of Derville with a deadly chill at his heart.—"They are all right. Money! Money!" cried the perfumer, out in the street, talking to himself, as is the wont of busy men in this turbulent seething Paris, which a modern poet calls "a vat."

As he came into his shop, one of the assistants, who had been out delivering invoices to the customers, told him that as the New Year was at hand, every one had torn off the receipt-form at the foot and kept the invoices.

"Then there is no money anywhere!" Birotteau exclaimed aloud in the shop. All the assistants looked up at this, and he bit his lips.

In this way five days went by; and during those five days Braschon, Lourdois, Thorien, Grindot, Chaffaroux, and all the creditors whose bills remained unpaid, passed through the chameleon's intermediate transitions of tone, from the serene hues of confidence to the wrathful red of the commercial Bellona. In Paris, in such crises, suspicion is as quick to reach the panic stage as confidence is slow to show expansive symptoms; and when a creditor once adopts the restringent system of doubts and precautions in business relations, he is apt to descend to underhand villanies that put him below his debtor's level. From cringing civility, the creditors passed successively through the inflammatory phase, the red of impatience, the lurid coruscations of importunity, to outbursts of disappointment, and from the cold-blue stage of making up their minds to the black insolence of threatening to serve a writ.

Braschon, the rich furniture-dealer of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, who had not been included in the invitations to the ball, sounded to arms in his quality of the creditor whose self-love has been wounded. Paid he meant to be, and within twenty-four hours; he required security, not deposits of furniture, but a second mortgage, the mortgage for forty thousand francs on the property in the Faubourg du Temple. In spite of their furious recriminations, these gentry still left César occasional intervals of peace, when he might breathe; but instead of bringing a resolute will to carry these outworks of an awkward position, and so putting an end to them, Birotteau was taxing all his wits to keep the state of things from the knowledge of his wife, and the one person who could give him counsel knew nothing of his difficulties. He stood sentinel on the threshold of his shop. He confided his momentary inconvenience to Célestin, who watched his employer with curious and astonished eyes; already César had fallen somewhat in his esteem, as men accustomed to prosperity are apt to dwindle when evil days discover that all their power consists in the increased facility of dealing with matters of every-day experience, acquired by an ordinary intelligence.

But if César lacked the mental energy required for defending himself when attacked at so many points at once, he had sufficient courage to face his position. Before the 15th of January he required the sum of sixty thousand francs, and thirty thousand of these were due on the 31st of December. Part of this sum was owing for the house, part for rent and accounts to be paid in ready money, part of it in bills to be met; with all his efforts he could only collect twenty thousand francs, so that there was a deficit of ten thousand, to be made up by the end of the month. Nothing seemed hopeless to him, for he had already ceased to look beyond the present moment, and, like an adventurer, had begun to live from day to day. At length he resolved to make what for him was a bold stroke. Before it was known that he was in difficulties, he would apply to François Keller, banker, orator, and philanthropist, widely known for his beneficence,

and for his desire to stand well with the mercantile world of Paris, always with a view to representing their interests one day as a deputy in the Chamber. In politics the banker was a Liberal, and César was a Royalist; but the perfumer decided that the capitalist was a man after his own heart, and that a difference of opinion in politics was but one reason the more for opening an account. If paper should be necessary, he did not doubt Popinot's devotion, and counted upon obtaining from him some thirty bills of a thousand francs each; with these he might hold out until he gained his lawsuit, the forty thousand francs involved in it being offered as security to the most urgent creditors.

The effusive soul, who was wont to confide to the pillow of his dear Constance the least emotions of his existence, who drew his courage from her, and was wont to seek of her the light thrown by contradiction on all topics, was cut off from all exchange of ideas with his first assistant, his uncle, and his wife, and found that the weight of his cares was thereby doubled. Yet this self-sacrificing martyr preferred suffering alone to the alternative of casting his wife's soul into the fiery furnace; he would tell her about the danger when it was past. Perhaps, too, he shrank from telling her the hideous secret; he stood in some fear of his wife, and this fear lent him courage. He went every morning to low mass at Saint-Roch, and told his troubles to God.

"If I do not meet a soldier on my way back from Saint-Roch, I will take it as a sign that my prayer is heard. It shall be God's answer to me," he said to himself, after he had prayed for deliverance.

And, for his happiness, he did not meet a soldier. Yet, nevertheless, his heart was overfull, and he needed another human heart to whom he could make moan. Césarine, to whom he had already told the fatal news, learned the whole truth, and stolen glances were exchanged between them, glances fraught with despair or repressed hope, passionate invocations, appeals, and sympathetic responses, answering gleams of intelligence between soul and soul. For his wife

César put on high spirits and mirth. If Constance asked any question—"Pshaw, everything was all right. Popinot" (to whom César gave not a thought) "was doing well! The Oil was selling! Claparon's bills would be met; there was nothing to fear." The hollow merriment was ghastly. When his wife lay sleeping amid the splendors, Birotteau would rise, and fall to thinking over his misfortune; and more than once Césarine came in, in her night-shift, barefooted, with a shawl about her white shoulders.

"Papa, you are crying; I can hear you," she would say, and she would cry herself as she spoke.

When César had written to ask the great François Keller to make an appointment with him, he fell into such a state of torpor that Césarine persuaded him to walk out with her. In the streets of Paris he saw nothing but huge red placards, and the words CEPHALIC OIL in staring letters everywhere met his eyes.

While the glory of the Queen of Roses was thus waning in disastrous gloom, the firm of A. Popinot was dawning radiant with the sunrise splendors of success. Anselme had taken counsel of Gaudissart and Finot, and had launched his oil boldly. During the past three days two thousand placards had been posted in the most conspicuous situations in Paris. Every one in the streets was confronted with the Cephalic Oil, and willy-nilly must read the pithy remarks from Finot's pen as to the impossibility of stimulating the growth of the hair, and the perils attendant on dyeing it, together with an extract from a paper read before the Académie des Sciences by Vauquelin. It was as good as a certificate of existence for dead hair, thus held out to those who should use the Cephalic Oil. The shop-doors of every perfumer, hairdresser, and wigmaker in Paris were made glorious with gilded frames, containing a beautiful design, printed on vellum paper, with a reduced facsimile of the picture of "Hero and Leander" at the top, and beneath it ran the motto, *The ancient peoples of antiquity preserved their hair by the use of* CEPHALIC OIL.

"He has thought of permanent frames; he has found an advertisement that will last forever!" said Birotteau to himself, as he stood staring in dull amazement at the shop-front of the Silver Bell.

"Then you did not see a frame on your own door?" asked his daughter. "M. Anselme brought it himself, and left three hundred bottles of the oil with Célestin."

"No, I did not see it," he answered.

"And Célestin has already sold fifty to chance comers, and sixty to our own customers."

"Oh!" said César.

The sound of myriad bells that misery sets ringing in the ears of her victims had made the perfumer dizzy; his head seemed to spin round and round in those days. Popinot had waited a whole hour to speak with him on the day before, and had gone away after chatting with Constance and Césarine; the women told him that César was very busy over his great scheme.

"Oh, yes, the building-land!" Popinot had said.

Luckily, Popinot had not left the Rue des Cinq-Diamants for a month; he had worked day and night at his business, and had seen neither Ragon, nor Pillerault, nor his uncle. The poor lad was never in bed before two o'clock in the morning; he had only two assistants, and at the rate at which things were going he would soon have work enough for four. Opportunity is everything in business; success is a horse which, if caught by the mane and ridden by a bold rider, will carry him on to fortune. Popinot told himself that he should receive a welcome when, at the end of six months, he could carry the news to his aunt and uncle—"I am saved; my fortune is made!"—a welcome, too, from Birotteau when, at the end of the first half year, he should bring him his share of the profits—thirty or forty thousand francs! He had not heard of Roguin's disappearance, nor of César's consequent disasters and difficulties; so that he could not let fall any indiscreet remarks in Madame Birotteau's presence.

Popinot had promised Finot five hundred francs for each

of the leading newspapers (ten in all), and three hundred francs for each second-rate paper (and of these, too, there were ten), if the Cephalic Oil was mentioned three times a month in each. Of those eight thousand francs, Finot beheld three thousand as his own, his first stake to lay on the vast green table of speculation. So he had sprung like a lion upon his friends and acquaintances; he haunted newspaper offices; writers of newspaper articles awoke from slumber to find him sitting by their pillows; and the evening found him pacing the lobbies of all the theatres. "Remember my oil, my dear fellow; it is nothing to me; a matter of good fellowship, you know; Gaudissart, a jolly dog." With this formula, his harangues always began and ended. He filled up spaces at the foot of the last columns in the papers, and left the money to those upon the staff. He was as cunning as any super who is minded to transform himself into an actor, and as active as an errand boy on sixty francs a month; he wrote insinuating letters, he worked on the vanity of all and sundry, he did dirty work for editors, to the end that his paragraphs might be inserted in their papers. His enthusiastic energy left no means untried—money, dinners, platitudes. By means of tickets for the play he corrupted the men who finish off the columns toward midnight with short paragraphs of small news items already set up; hanging about the printing-office for that purpose, as if he had proofs to revise.

So by dint of making every one his friend, Finot secured the triumph of the Cephalic Oil over the Pate de Regnault and the Mixture Brésilienne, over all the inventions, in fact, whose promoters had the wit to comprehend the influence of journalism and the effect produced upon the public mind by the piston stroke of the reiterated paragraph. In that age of innocence, journalists, like draught-oxen, were unaware of their strength; their heads ran on actresses—Mesdemoiselles Florine, Tullia, Mariette—they lorded it over all creation, and made no practical use of their powers. In Andoche's propositions there was no actress to be applauded,

no drama to be put upon the stage; he did not ask them to make a success of his vaudevilles, nor to pay him for his paragraphs; on the contrary, he offered money in season and opportune breakfasts; so there was not a newspaper that did not mention the Cephalic Oil, and how that it was in accordance with Vauquelin's investigations; not a journal that did not scoff at the superstition that the hair could be induced to grow, and proclaim the danger of dyeing it.

These paragraphs rejoiced Gaudissart's heart. He laid in a supply of papers wherewith to demolish prejudice in the provinces, and accomplished the manœuvre known among speculators since his time as "taking the public by storm." In those days newspapers from Paris exercised a great influence in the departments, the hapless country districts being still "without organs." The Paris newspaper, therefore, was taken up as a serious study, and read through from the heading to the printer's name on the last line of the last page, where the irony of persecuted opinion might be supposed to lurk.

Gaudissart, thus supported by the press, had a brilliant success from the very first in every town where his tongue had play. Every provincial shopkeeper was anxious for a frame and copies of "Hero and Leander." Finot devised that charming joke against Macassar Oil, which drew such laughter at the Funambules, when Pierrot takes up an old house-brush, visibly worn down to the holes, and rubs it with Macassar Oil, and lo the stump becomes a mop, a piece of irony which brought down the house. In later days Finot would gayly relate how that but for those three thousand francs he must have died of want and misery. For him three thousand francs was a fortune. In this campaign he discovered the power of advertising, which he was to wield so wisely and so much to his own profit. Three months later this pioneer was the editor of a small paper, of which after a time he became the proprietor, and so laid the foundation of his fortune. Even as the Illustrious Gaudissart, that Murat among commercial travellers, "took the public by storm," and gained

brilliant victories along the frontiers and in the provinces for the house of Popinot, so did the cause gain ground in public opinion in Paris, thanks to the desperate assault upon the newspapers, which gave it the prompt publicity likewise secured by the Mixture Brésilienne and the Pate de Regnault. . Three fortunes were made by this means, and then began the descent of the thousands of ambitious tradesmen who have since gone down by battalions into the arena of journalism, and there called advertising into being. A mighty revolution was wrought.

At that moment the words "Popinot & Company" were flaunting on every wall and shop door; and Birotteau, unable to measure the enormous area over which these announcements were displayed, contented himself with saying to Césarine, "Little Popinot is following in my footsteps," without comprehending the difference of the times, without appreciation of the new methods and improved means of communication which spread intelligence much more rapidly than heretofore.

Birotteau had not set foot in his factory since the ball; he did not know how busy and energetic Popinot had been. Anselme had set all Birotteau's operatives on the work, and slept in the place. He saw Césarine sitting on every packing-case and reclining on every package; her face looked at him from each new invoice. "She will be my wife!" he said to himself, as, with coat thrown off, and shirt-sleeves rolled above the elbows, he hammered in the nails with all his might, while his assistants were sent out on business.

The next day, after spending the whole night in pondering what to say and what not to say to the great banker, César reached the Rue du Houssaye, and entered, with a heart that beat painfully fast, the mansion of the Liberal financier, the adherent of a political party accused, and not unjustly, of desiring the downfall of the Bourbons. To Birotteau, as to most small merchants in Paris, the manners and customs and the personality of those who move in high financial circles were quite unknown; for the smaller traders

usually deal with lesser houses, which form a sort of intermediate term, a highly satisfactory arrangement for the great capitalists, who find in them one guarantee the more.

Constance and Birotteau, who had never overdrawn their balance, who had never known what it was to have no money in the safe, and no bills in the portfolio, had not had recourse to these banks of the second order; and, for the best of reasons, were entirely unknown in the higher financial world. Perhaps it is a mistaken policy sedulously to abstain from borrowing even though you may not require the money; opinions differ on this head; but be that as it may, Birotteau at that moment deeply regretted that he had never put his signature to a piece of paper. Yet, as he was known as a deputy-mayor and a shrewd man of business, he imagined that he would only have to mention his name, and he should see the banker at once; he did not know that men flocked to the Kellers' audiences as to the court of a king. In the antechamber of the study occupied by the man with so many claims to greatness, Birotteau found himself among a crowd composed of deputies, writers, journalists, stockbrokers, great merchants, men of business, engineers, and, above all, of familiars, who made their way through the groups of speakers and knocked in a particular manner at the door of the study, where they had the privilege of entry.

"What am I in the middle of this machinery?" Birotteau asked himself, quite bewildered by the stir and bustle in this factory, where so much brain-power was at work furnishing daily bread for the camp of the Opposition; this theatre where rehearsals of the grand tragi-comedy played by the Left were wont to take place.

On one hand he heard a discussion relative to a loan that was being negotiated to complete the construction of the principal lines of canal recommended by the Department of Roads and Bridges; a question of millions! On the other, journalists, the bankers' jackals, were talking of yesterday's sitting and of their patron's *extempore* speech. During the two hours while he waited, he saw the banker-politician

thrice emerge from his cabinet, accompanying some visitor of importance for a few paces through the antechamber. Keller went as far as the door with the last—General Foy.

"It is all over with me!" Birotteau said to himself, and something clutched at his heart.

As the great banker returned to his cabinet, the whole troop of courtiers, friends, and followers crowded after him, like the canine race about some attractive female of the species. One or two bolder curs slipped in spite of him into the audience chamber. The conferences lasted for five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour. Some went away visibly chop-fallen; some with a satisfied look; some assumed important airs. Time went by, and Birotteau looked anxiously at the clock. No one paid the slightest attention to the man with a secret care, sighing restlessly in the gilded chair by the hearth, at the very door of the closet that contained that panacea for all troubles—credit.

Dolefully César thought how that he too, in his own house and for a little while, had been a king, as this man was, morning after morning; and he fathomed the depths of the abyss into which he was falling. He had bitter thoughts! How many unshed tears were crowded into those two hours! How many petitions he put up that this man might incline a favorable ear; for beneath the husk of popularity-seeking good-nature, Birotteau instinctively felt that there lurked in Keller an insolent, tyrannous, and violent temper, a brutal craving to domineer, which alarmed his meek nature. At length, when but ten or a dozen people were left, Birotteau determined to start up when the outer door of the audience chamber creaked on its hinges, and to put himself on a level with the great public speaker with the remark, "I am Birotteau!" The first grenadier who flung himself into the redoubt at Borodino did not display more courage than the perfumer when he made up his mind to carry out this manœuvre.

"After all," said he to himself, "I am his deputy-mayor," and he rose to give his name.

François Keller's countenance took on an amiable expression; clearly he meant to be civil; he glanced at Birotteau's red ribbon, turned, opened the door of his cabinet, and indicated the way; but stayed behind himself for a while to speak with two new-comers who sprang up the staircase with tempestuous speed.

"Decazes would like to speak with you," said one of these two.

"It is a question of making an end of the Pavillon Marsan! The King sees clearly. He is coming over to us!" cried the other.

"We will all go to the Chambers," returned the banker, and he entered his cabinet with the air of the frog that would fain be an ox.

"How can he think of his own affairs?" thought César, overwhelmed.

The radiance of the sun of superiority dazzled the perfumer, as the light blinds those insects which can only exist in the shade or in the dusk of a summer night.

Birotteau saw a copy of the Budget lying on a vast table, among piles of pamphlets and volumes of the "Moniteur," which lay open, displaying marked passages, past utterances of a Minister, which were shortly to be hurled at his head; he was to be made to eat his words amid the plaudits of a crowd of dunces, incapable of comprehending that events modify everything. On another table stood a collection of boxes full of papers, a heap of memorials and projects, the thousand and one reports confided to a man in whose exchequer every nascent industry endeavors to dip.

The regal splendor of the cabinet, filled with pictures and statues and works of art; the litter on the chimney-piece; the accumulations of documents relating to business concerns at home and abroad, heaped up like bales of goods —all these things impressed Birotteau; he dwindled in his own eyes, his nervousness increased, the blood ran cold in his veins.

On François Keller's desk there lay some bundles of

bills, letters of exchange, and circular-letters. To these the great man addressed himself; and as he swiftly put his signature to those that required no examination, "To what do I owe the honor of your visit, sir?" asked he.

At these words addressed to him alone, by the voice that spoke to all Europe, while the restless hand never ceased to traverse the paper, the poor perfumer felt as if a redhot iron had been thrust through his vitals. His face forthwith assumed that ingratiating expression with which the banker had grown familiar during ten years of experience; the expression always meant that the wearers desired to involve the house of Keller in some affair of great importance to the would-be borrowers and to no one else, an expression which shuts the banker's doors upon them at once. So François Keller shot a glance at César, a Napoleonic glance, which seemed to go through the perfumer's head. This imitation of their Emperor was a slight piece of affectation which certain parvenus permitted themselves, though the false coin was scarcely a passable copy of the true. For César, of the extreme Right in politics, the fanatical partisan of the Government, the factor in the monarchical election, that glance was like the stamp which a custom-house officer sets on a bale of goods.

"I do not want to take up your minutes unduly, sir; I will be brief. I have come on a simple matter of private business, to know if you will open a loan account with me. As an ex-judge of the Tribunal of Commerce, and a man well known at the Bank of France, you can understand that if I had bills to discount I should only have to apply to the Bank where you are a Governor. I have had the honor of being associated in my functions at the Tribunal with M. le Baron Thibon, the head of the bill-discounting department, and he certainly would not refuse me. But as I have never tried to borrow money nor accepted a bill, my signature is unknown, and you know how many difficulties lie in the way of negotiating a loan in such a case—"

Keller moved his head; and Birotteau, construing this as a sign of impatience, continued: "The fact is, sir, that I have engaged in a speculation in land, outside my own line of business—"

François Keller, still signing and reading, and, to all appearance, paying no attention to César's remarks, turned at this, with a sign that he was following what was said. Birotteau took heart; his affair was in a promising way, he thought; he breathed more freely.

"Go on; I understand," said Keller good-humoredly.

"I am the purchaser of one-half of the building-land near the Madeleine."

"Yes. I heard from Nucingen of the big affair that the firm of Claparon is negotiating."

"Well," the perfumer went on, "a loan of a hundred thousand francs, secured on my share of the land, or on my business, would suffice to tide me over until I can touch the profits which must shortly accrue from a venture in my own way of business. If necessary, I would cover the amount by bills drawn on a new firm—Popinot & Company, a young house which—"

Keller seemed to be very little interested in this description of the firm of Popinot, and Birotteau gathered that he had somehow taken a wrong turn; he stopped; then, in dismay at the pause, he went on again: "As for the interest, we—"

"Yes, yes," said the banker; "the thing may be arranged, and do not doubt my desire to meet you in the matter. Occupied as I am, I have all the finances of Europe on my hands, and the Chamber absorbs every moment of my time, so you will not be surprised to hear that I leave the investigation of a vast amount of regular business to my managers. Go downstairs, and see my brother Adolphe; explain the nature of your guarantees to him; and if he assents, return here with him to-morrow or the day after, at the time when I look into affairs of this kind, at five o'clock in the morning. We shall be proud and happy to

receive your confidence; you are one of the consistent Royalists; and your esteem is the more flattering, since that politically we may find ourselves at enmity."

"Sir," said the perfumer, elated by this oratorical flourish, "I am as deserving of the honor you do me as of the signal mark of Royal favor . . . not unmerited by the discharge of my functions at the Consular Tribunal, and by fighting for—"

"Yes," continued the banker, "the reputation which you enjoy is a passport, M. Birotteau. You are sure to propose nothing that is not feasible, and you can reckon upon our co-operation."

A door, which Birotteau had not noticed, was opened, and a woman entered; it was Mme. Keller, one of the two daughters of the Comte de Gondreville, a peer of France.

"I hope I shall see you, dear, before you go to the Chamber," said she.

"It is two o'clock," exclaimed the banker; "the battle has begun. Excuse me, sir—the question is one of upsetting a ministry—" he went as far as the door of the salon with the perfumer, and bade a man in livery, "Take this gentleman to M. Adolphe."

Birotteau traversed a labyrinth of staircases on the way to a private office, less sumptuous than the cabinet of the head of the firm, but more business-like in appearance; he was borne along by an *if*, that easiest pacing mount that hope can furnish; he stroked his chin, and thought that the great man's compliments augured excellently well for his plans. It was regrettable that a man so amiable, so capable, so great an orator, should be inimical to the Bourbons.

Still full of these illusions, he entered M. Adolphe Keller's sanctum, a bare, chilly-looking room. Dingy curtains hung in the windows, the floor was covered with a much-worn carpet, and the furniture consisted of a couple of cylinder desks and one or two office chairs. This cabinet was to the first as the kitchen to the dining-room, as the fac-

tory to the shop. Here matters of business were penetrated to the core, here enterprises were analyzed, and preliminary charges levied by the bank on all promising undertakings. Here originated all those bold strokes for which the Kellers were so well known in the highest commercial regions, when they would secure and rapidly exploit a monopoly in a few days. Here, too, omissions, on the part of the legislature received careful attention, and unblushing demands were made for "sops in the pan" (in the language of the Stock Exchange), that is to say, for money paid in consideration for small indefinable services, for standing godfather to an infant enterprise, and so accrediting it. Here were woven those tissues of fraud after a legal pattern, which consist in investing money as a sleeping-partner in some concern in temporary difficulties, with a view to slaughtering the affair as soon as it succeeds; the brothers would lie in wait, call in their capital at a critical moment, an ugly manœuvre that put the whole thing in their own hands, and involved the hapless active partner in their toils.

The two brothers adopted separate *rôles*. On high stood François, the politician, the man of brilliant parts; he bore himself like a king, he distributed favors and promises, he made himself agreeable to every one. Everything was easy when you spoke with him; he did business royally; he poured out the heady wine of fair words, which intoxicated inexperienced speculators and promoters of new schemes; he developed their own ideas for them But Adolphe below absolved his brother on the score of political preoccupations, and cleverly raked in the winnings; he was the responsible brother, the one who was hard to persuade, so that there were two words to every bargain concluded with that treacherous house, and not seldom the gracious Yes of the sumptuous cabinet was transmuted into a dry No in Adolphe's office.

This manœuvre of delay gained time for reflection, and often served to amuse less skilful competitors.

Adolphe Keller was chatting with the famous Palma, the

trusted counsellor of the house, who withdrew as Birotteau came in. The perfumer explained his errand; and Adolphe, the more cunning of the two brothers, lynx-natured, keen-eyed, thin-lipped, hard-favored, listened to him with lowered head, watching the applicant over his spectacles, eying him the while with what must be called the banker's gaze, in which there is something of the vulture, something of the attorney; a gaze at once covetous and cold, clear and inscrutable, sombre and ablaze with light.

"Will you be so good as to send me the documents relative to this Madeleine affair," said he, "since therein lies the guarantee of the account; they must be examined into before we begin to discuss the case on its merits. If the affair is satisfactory, we might possibly, to avoid encumbering you, be content to take part of the profits instead of discount."

"Come," said Birotteau to himself, as he went home again, "I see his drift. Like the hunted beaver, I must part with some of my skin. It is better to lose your fleece than to lose your life."

He went upstairs in high spirits, and his mirth had a genuine ring.

"I am saved," he told Césarine; "Keller will open a loan account with me."

But not until the 29th of December could Birotteau gain admittance a second time to Adolphe Keller's office. On the occasion of his first call, Adolphe was six leagues away from Paris, looking at some property which the great orator had a mind to buy. The next time both the Kellers were closeted together, and could see no one that morning; it was a question of a tender for a loan proposed by the Chambers, and they begged M. Birotteau to return on the following Friday. These delays were heartbreaking to the perfumer; but Friday came at last, and Birotteau sat by the fire in the office, with the daylight falling full on his face, and Adolphe Keller, sitting opposite, was saying, as he held up the notarial deeds, "These are all right, sir; but what proportion of the purchase-money have you paid?"

"A hundred and forty thousand francs."

"In money?"

"In bills."

"Have they been met?"

"They have not fallen due."

"But suppose that you have given more for the land than it is actually worth (taking it at its present value), where is our guarantee? We should have no security but the good opinion which you inspire and the esteem in which you are held. Business is not based on sentiment. If you had paid two hundred thousand francs, supposing that you have given too much by a hundred thousand francs to get possession of the land, we should in that case have at any rate a guarantee of a hundred thousand francs for the hundred thousand you want to borrow. The result for us would be that we should be owners of the land in your place, by paying your share; in that case we must know if it is a good piece of business. For if we are to wait five years to double our capital, it would be better to put the money out to interest through the bank. So many things may happen. You want to draw an accommodation bill to meet your bills when they fall due? It is a risky thing to do! You go back to take a leap better. This is not in our way of business."

For Birotteau, it was as if the executioner had touched his shoulder with the branding-iron. He lost his head.

"Let us see," said Adolphe, "my brother takes a warm interest in you; he spoke of you to me. Let us look into your affairs," he added, and he glanced at the perfumer with the expression of a courtesan pressed for a quarter's rent.

Birotteau became a Molineux, and acted the part of the man at whom he had laughed so loftily. Kept in play by the banker, who took a pleasure in unwinding the skein of the poor man's thoughts, and showed himself as expert in the art of examining a merchant as the elder Popinot was skilled in unloosing a criminal's tongue, César told the story of his business career; he brought the Pate des Sultanes and the Toilet Lotion upon the scene; he gave a complete account

of his dealings with Roguin, and, finally, of the lawsuit with regard to that mortgage from which he had reaped no benefit. He saw Keller's musing smile and jerk of the head from time to time, and said to himself, "He is giving an ear to me! He is interested; I shall have my loan!" and Adolphe Keller was laughing at Birotteau, as Birotteau himself had laughed at Molineux. Carried away by the impulse of loquacity peculiar to those people on whom misfortune has an intoxicating effect, César showed himself as he really was; he helped the banker to take his measure when he suggested as his final expedient the Cephalic Oil and the firm of Popinot by way of a guarantee. Led away by a delusive hope, he allowed Adolphe Keller to fathom him and examine into his affairs, until Adolphe Keller saw in the man before him a Royalist blockhead on the brink of bankruptcy. Then, delighted at the prospect of this failure of the deputy-mayor of his arrondissement, of a man whose party was in power, who had been but lately decorated, Adolphe told Birotteau plainly that he could neither open a loan account with him, nor speak on his behalf to the orator brother, the great François. If François were inclined to extend an imbecile generosity to a political adversary, and to come to the aid of a man who held opinions diametrically opposed to his own, he, Adolphe, had no mind that his brother should be a dupe; he would do all that in him lay to prevent his brother from holding out a helping hand to one of Napoleon's old antagonists, to a man who was wounded at Saint-Roch. Birotteau, exasperated at this, tried to say something about covetousness in the high places of the financial world, of hard-heartedness and sham philanthropy; but he was overcome with such terrible distress that he could scarcely stammer out a few words about the institution of the Bank of France, to which the Kellers had recourse.

"But the Bank of France will never make an advance which a private bank declines," said Adolphe Keller.

"It has always seemed to me," said Birotteau, "that the Bank was not fulfilling the purpose for which it was estab-

lished, when the governors congratulate themselves on a balance-sheet in which they have lost only one or two hundred thousand francs in transactions with the mercantile world of Paris; it is the province of the Bank to watch over and foster trade."

Adolphe began to smile, and rose to his feet like a man who is bored.

"If the Bank began to finance all the men in difficulties on 'Change, where rascality congregates in the slipperiest places of the financial world, the Bank would file her schedule before a year was out. The Bank is hard put to it as it is to guard against accommodation bills and fraudulent letters of exchange, and how would it be possible to examine into the affairs of every one who should be minded to apply for assistance?"

"I want ten thousand francs for to-morrow, Saturday the 30th; and where are they to come from?" Birotteau asked himself, as he crossed the court.

When the 31st is a holiday, payment is due on the 30th, according to custom. César's eyes were so full of tears that, as he reached the great gateway, he scarcely saw a handsome English horse, covered with foam, that pulled up sharply at the gate, and one of the neatest cabriolets to be seen in the streets of Paris. He would fain have been run over by the cabriolet; it would be an accidental death, and the confusion in his affairs would have been set down to the suddenness of the catastrophe. He did not recognize du Tillet's slender figure in faultless morning dress, or see him fling the reins to his servant and put a rug over the back of the thoroughbred.

"What brings *you* here?" asked du Tillet, addressing his old master.

Du Tillet knew quite well why Birotteau had come. The Kellers had made inquiries of Claparon, and Claparon, taking his cue from du Tillet, had blighted the perfumer's old-established business reputation. The tears in the unlucky merchant's eyes told the tale sufficiently plainly, in spite of his sudden effort to keep them back.

"Perhaps you have been asking these Turks to oblige you in some way," said du Tillet, "cutthroats of commerce that they are, who have played many a mean trick; they will make a corner in indigo, for instance; they lower rice, forcing holders to sell cheap, so that they can get the game into their own hands and control the market; they are inhuman pirates, who know neither law, nor faith, nor conscience. You cannot know what things they are capable of doing. They will open a loan account with you if you have some promising bit of business; and as soon as you have gone too far to draw back, they will pull you up and put pressure upon you till you make the whole affair over to them for next to nothing. Pretty stories they could tell you at Havre and Bordeaux and Marseilles about the Kellers! Politics are a cloak that cover a lot of dirty doings, I can tell you! So I make them useful without scruple. Let us take a turn or two, my dear Birotteau.—Joseph, walk the horse up and down, he is overheated, and a thousand crowns is a big investment in horseflesh."

He turned toward the Boulevard.

"Now, my dear master (for you used to be my master), is it money that you need? And they have asked you for security, the wretches! Well, for my own part, I know you; and I can offer to give you cash against your bills. I have made my money honorably, and with unheard-of toil. I went in quest of fortune to Germany! At this time of day, I may tell you this—that I bought up the King's debts there for forty per cent of their value; your guarantee was very useful to me then, and I am grateful. If you want ten thousand francs, they are at your service."

"What! du Tillet," cried César, "do you really mean it? Are you not making game of me? Yes, I am a little pressed for money, just for the moment—"

"I know; Roguin's affair," returned du Tillet. "Eh! yes. I myself have been let in there for ten thousand francs, which the old rogue borrowed of me to run away with; but Mme. Roguin will repay the money out of her claims on his

estate. I advised her, poor thing, not to be so foolish as to give up her fortune to pay debts contracted for a mistress; it would be very well if she could pay them all, but how is she to make distinctions in favor of this or that creditor, to the prejudice of others? You are no Roguin; I know you," continued du Tillet; "you would rather blow your brains out than cause me to lose a sou. Here we are in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin; come up and see me."

It pleased the young upstart to take his old employer, not through the offices, but by way of the private entry, and to walk deliberately, so as to give him a full view of a handsome and luxuriously furnished dining-room, adorned with pictures bought in Germany; through two drawing-rooms, more splendid and elegant than any rooms that Birotteau had yet seen save in the Duc de Lenoncourt's house. The good citizen was dazzled by the gilding, the works of art, the costly knick-knacks, precious vases, and countless little details. All the glories of Constance's rooms paled before this display; and knowing, as he did, the cost of his own extravagance—"Where can he have found all these millions?" said he to himself.

Then they entered a bedroom, which as much surpassed his wife's as the mansion of a great singer at the Opéra surpasses the third-floor dwelling of some supernumerary. The ceiling was covered with violet satin relieved with silken folds of white, and the white fur of an ermine rug beside the bed brought out in contrast all the violet tints of a carpet from the Levant. The furniture and the accessories were novel in form, and exhibited the very refinement of extravagance. Birotteau stopped in front of an exquisite timepiece, with a Cupid and Psyche upon it, a replica of one which had just been made for a celebrated banker. At length master and assistant reached a cabinet, the dainty sanctum of a fashionable dandy, redolent rather of love than of finance. It was Mme. Roguin, doubtless, who, in her gratitude for the care and thought given to her fortune, had bestowed, by way of a thank-offering, the paper-cutter of wrought gold, the

carved malachite paper-weights, and all the costly gewgaws of unbridled luxury. The carpet, one of the richest products of the Belgian loom, was as great a surprise to the eyes as its soft, thick pile to the tread. Du Tillet drew a chair to the fire for the poor dazzled and bewildered perfumer.

"Will you breakfast with me?" He rang the bell; it was answered by a servant, who was better dressed than the visitor.

"Ask M. Legras to come up, and then tell Joseph to return, you will find him at the door of Keller's bank; and you can go to Adolphe Keller's house, and say that, instead of seeing him now, I shall wait till he goes on 'Change. Send up breakfast, and be quick about it."

This talk dazed the perfumer.

"So he, du Tillet, makes that formidable Adolphe Keller come to him at his whistle, as if he were a dog!"

A hop-o'-my-thumb of a page came in and spread a table so slender that it had escaped Birotteau's notice, setting thereon a Strasburg pie, a bottle of Bordeaux wine, and various luxuries which did not appear on Birotteau's table twice in a quarter, on high days and holidays. Du Tillet was enjoying himself. His feeling of hatred for the one man who had a right to despise him diffused itself like a warm glow through his veins, till the sight of Birotteau stirred in the depths of his nature the same sensations that the spectacle of a sheep struggling for its life against a tiger might give. A generous thought flashed across him; he asked himself whether he had not carried his vengeance far enough; he hesitated between the counsels of a newly-awakened pity and those of a hate grown drowsy.

"Commercially speaking, I can annihilate the man," he thought; "I have power of life and death over him, over his wife, who kept me on the rack, and his daughter, whose hand once seemed to me to grasp a whole fortune. I have his money as it is, so let us be content to let the poor simpleton swim to the end of his tether, which I shall hold."

But honest folk are wanting in tact; they do what seems

good to them without calculating its effect on others, because they themselves are straightforward, and have no afterthoughts. So Birotteau filled up the measure of his own misfortune; he irritated the tiger; all unwittingly he sent a shaft home, and made an implacable enemy of him at a word, by his praise, by giving expression to his honest thoughts, by the sheer light-heartedness which is the gift of a blameless conscience. The cashier came in; and du Tillet said, looking toward César, "M. Legras, bring me ten thousand francs in cash, and a bill for the amount payable to my order in ninety days by this gentleman, who is M. Birotteau, as you know."

Du Tillet waited on his guest, and poured out a glass of Bordeaux wine for him; and Birotteau, who thought himself saved, laughed convulsively, fingered his watch-chain, and did not touch the food until his ex-assistant said, "You do not eat." In this way he laid bare the depths of the gulf into which du Tillet's hand had plunged him, while the hand which had drawn him out was still stretched over him, and might yet plunge him back again. When the cashier returned, and the bill had been accepted, and César felt the ten banknotes in his pocket, he could no longer contain his joy. But a moment ago the news that he could not meet his engagements seemed to be about to be published abroad through his Quarter, the Bank must know it, he must confess that he was ruined to his wife; now everything was safe! The joy of his deliverance was as keen as the torture of impending bankruptcy had been. Tears filled the poor man's eyes in spite of himself. . . .

"What can be the matter, my dear master?" asked du Tillet. "Would you not do to-morrow for me what I am doing to-day for you? Isn't it as simple as saying good-day?"

"Du Tillet," said the worthy man, with solemn emphasis, as he rose and took his ex-assistant by the hand, "I restore you to your old place in my esteem."

"What! had I forfeited it?" asked du Tillet; and, for

all his prosperity, he felt this rude home-thrust, and his color rose.

"Forfeited . . . not exactly that," said Birotteau, thunderstruck by his folly; "people talked about you and Mme. Roguin. The devil! another man's wife . . ."

"You are beating about the bush, old boy," thought du Tillet, in an old phrase learned in his earlier days.

And even as that thought crossed his mind, he returned to his old design. He would lay this virtue low, he would trample it under foot; all Paris should point the finger of scorn at the honest and honorable man who had caught him, du Tillet, with his hand in the till. Every hatred of every kind, political or private, between woman and woman, or between man and man, dates from some similar detection. There is no cause for hate in compromised interests, in a wound, nor even in a box on the ear; such injuries as these are not irreparable. But to be found out in some base piece of iniquity, to be caught in the act! . . . The duel that ensues between the criminal and the discoverer of the crime cannot but be to the death.

"Oh! Mme. Roguin," said du Tillet laughingly; "but isn't that rather a feather in a young man's cap? I understand you, my dear master, they must have told you that she loaned me money. Well, on the contrary, it is I who have re-established her finances, which were curiously involved in her husband's affairs. My fortune has been honestly made, as I have just told you. I had nothing, as you know. Young men sometimes find themselves in terrible straits, and in dire need one may strain a point; but if, like the Republic, one has made a forced loan now and again, why, one returns it afterward, and is as honest as France herself."

"Just so," said César. "My boy—God—Isn't it Voltaire who says:

" 'He made of repentance the virtue of mortals?' "

"So long as one does not take his neighbor's money in a base and cowardly way," du Tillet continued, smarting

once more under this application of verse; "as if you, for instance, were to fail before the three months are out, and it would be all up with my ten thousand francs—"

"I fail?" cried Birotteau (he had taken three glasses of wine, and happiness had gone to his head). "My opinions of bankruptcy are well known. A failure is commercial death. I should die."

"Long life to you!" said du Tillet.

"To your prosperity!" returned the perfumer. "Why do you not come to me for your perfumery?"

"Upon my word," said du Tillet, "I confess that I am afraid to meet Mme. César, she always made an impression upon me; and if you were not my master, faith, I—"

"Oh! you are not the first who has thought her handsome, and wanted her, but she loves me! Well, du Tillet, my friend, do not do things by halves."

"What?"

Birotteau explained the affair of the building-land, and du Tillet opened his eyes, complimented César upon his acumen and foresight, and spoke highly of the prospects.

"Oh, well, I am much pleased to have your approbation; you are supposed to have one of the longest heads in the banking line, du Tillet! You can negotiate a loan from the Bank of France for me until the Cephalic Oil has made its way."

"I can send you to the firm of Nucingen," answered du Tillet, inwardly vowing that his victim should dance the whole mazy round of bankruptcy. He sat down to his desk to write the following letter to the Baron de Nucingen:

"MY DEAR BARON—The bearer of this letter is M. César Birotteau, deputy-mayor of the second arrondissement, and one of the best known manufacturing perfumers in Paris. He desires to be put in communication with you; you need not hesitate to do anything that he asks of you, and by obliging him you oblige your friend,

"F. DU TILLET."

Du Tillet put no dot over the *i* in his name. Among his business associates this clerical error was a sign which they all understood, and it was always made of set purpose; it annulled the heartiest recommendations, the warmest praise and instance in the body of the letter. On receiving such a note as this, where the very exclamation-marks breathed entreaty, in which du Tillet, figuratively speaking, went down on his knees, his associates knew that the writer had been unable to refuse the letter which was to be regarded as null and void. At sight of that undotted *i*, the receiver of the letter forthwith dismissed the applicant with empty compliments and vain promises. Not a few men of considerable reputation in the world are put off like children by this trick; for men of business, bankers, bill-discounters, and advocates have one and all two methods of signing their names; one is a dead letter, the other living. The shrewdest are deceived by it. You must have felt the double effect of a cold communication and a warm one to discover the stratagem.

"You are saving me, du Tillet," said César, as he read the present specimen.

"Oh dear me," said du Tillet, "just ask Nucingen for the money, and when he has read my letter he will let you have all that you want. Unluckily, my own capital is locked up at present, or I would not send you to the prince of bankers, for the Kellers are dwarfs compared with Nucingen. He is a second Law. With my bill of exchange, you will be ready for the 15th, and after that we will see. Nucingen and I are the best friends in the world; he would not disoblige me for a million."

"It is as good as a guarantee," said Birotteau to himself, and as he went away his heart thrilled with gratitude for du Tillet. "Ah, well," he thought, "a good deed never loses its reward," and he fell incontinently to moralizing. Yet there was one bitter drop in his cup of happiness. He had, it is true, prevented his wife from looking into the ledgers for several days. Célestin must undertake the bookkeeping in addition to his work, with some help from his master; he

could have wished his wife and daughter to remain upstairs in possession of the beautiful rooms which he had arranged and furnished for them; but when the first little glow of enjoyment was over, Mme. César would have died sooner than renounce the personal supervision of the details of the business, "the handle of the frying-pan," to use her own expression.

Birotteau was at his wits' end; he had done everything that he could think of to conceal the symptoms of his embarrassment from her eyes. Constance had strongly disapproved of sending in the accounts; she had scolded the assistants, and asked Célestin if he meant to ruin the house, believing that the idea was Célestin's own. And Célestin meekly bore the blame by Birotteau's orders. In the assistant's opinion, Mme. César governed the perfumer; and though it is possible to deceive the public, those of the household always know who is the real power in it. The confession was bound to come, and that soon, for du Tillet's loan would appear in the books, and must be accounted for.

As Birotteau came in at the door he saw, not without a shudder, that Constance was at her post, going through the amounts due to be paid, and doubtless balancing the books.

"How will you pay these to-morrow?" she asked in his ear, when he took his place beside her.

"With money," he replied, drawing the banknotes from his pocket, with a sign to Célestin to take them.

"But where do those notes come from?"

"I will tell you the whole story to-night.—Célestin, enter in the bill-book a bill for ten thousand francs due at the end of March, to order of du Tillet."

"Du Tillet!" echoed Constance, terror-stricken.

"I am just going to Popinot," said César. "It is too bad of me; I have not been round to see him yet. Is his oil selling?"

"The three hundred bottles which he brought are all sold out."

"Birotteau, do not go out again; I have something to say to you," said Constance. She caught her husband's arm, and drew him to her room in a hurry, which, under any other circumstances, would have been ludicrous.—"Du Tillet!" she exclaimed, when the husband and wife were together, and she had made sure that there was no one but Césarine present; "Du Tillet robbed us of three thousand francs! And you are doing business with du Tillet! A monster who—who tried to seduce me," she said in his ear.

"A bit of boyish folly," said Birotteau, suddenly transformed into a free thinker.

"Listen to me, Birotteau; you are falling out of your old ways; you never go to the factory now. There is something, I can feel it. Tell me about it; I want to know everything."

"Well, then," said Birotteau, "we have nearly been ruined; we were ruined, in fact, this very morning, but everything is set straight again," and he told the dreadful story of the past two weeks.

"So that was the cause of your illness!" exclaimed Constance.

"Yes, mamma," cried Césarine. "Father has been very brave, I am sure. If I were loved as he loves you, I would not wish more. He thought of nothing but your trouble."

"My dream has come true," said the poor wife, and pale, haggard, and terror-stricken, she sank down upon the sofa by the fireside. "I foresaw all this. I told you so that fatal night, in the old room which you have pulled down; we shall have nothing left but our eyes to cry over our losses. Poor Césarine, I—"

"Come, now; so that is what you say!" cried Birotteau. "I stand in need of courage, and are you damping it!"

"Forgive me, dear," said Constance, grasping César's hand in hers, with a tender pressure that went to the poor man's heart. "I was wrong; the misfortune has befallen us, I will be dumb, resigned, and strong to bear it. No, César, you shall never hear a complaint from me."

She sprang into César's arms, and said, while her tears

fell fast, "Take courage, dear. I should have courage enough for two, if it were needed."

"There is the Oil, dear wife; the Oil will save us."

"May God protect us!" cried Constance.

"Will not Anselme come to father's assistance?" asked Césarine.

"I will go to him now," exclaimed César; his wife's heart-breaking tone had been too much for his feelings; it seemed that he did not know her yet, after nineteen years of married life. "Do not be afraid, Constance; there is no fear now. Here, read M. du Tillet's letter to M. de Nucingen; he is sure to lend us the money. Between then and now I shall have gained my lawsuit. Besides," he added (a lying hope to fit the circumstances), "there is your uncle Pillerault. Courage is all that is wanted."

"If that were all!" said Constance, smiling.

Birotteau, with the great weight taken off his mind, walked like a man set free from prison; but within himself he felt the indefinable exhaustion consequent on mental exertion which has made heavy demands upon the nervous system, and required more than the daily allowance of will-power; he was conscious of the deficit when a man has drawn, as it were, on the capital of his vitality. Birotteau was growing old already.

Popinot's shop in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants had undergone great changes in the last two months. It had been repainted. The rows of bottles ensconced in the pigeon-hole shelves, touched up with paint, rejoiced the eyes of every merchant who knows the signs of prosperity. The floor of the shop was covered with packing-paper. The warehouse contained certain casks of oil, for which the devoted Gaudissart had procured an agency for Popinot. The books were kept upstairs in the counting-house. An old servant had been installed as housekeeper to Popinot and his three assistants.

Popinot himself, penned in a cash-desk in the corner of the shop screened off by a glass partition, was usually arrayed in a green baize apron and a pair of green-cloth over-

sleeves, when he was not buried, as at this moment, in a pile of papers. The post had just come in, and Popinot, with a pen behind his ear, was taking in handfuls of business letters and orders, when at the words, "Well, my boy?" he raised his head, saw his late employer, locked his cash-desk, and came forward joyously. The tip of the young man's nose was red, for there was no fire in the shop, and the door stood open.

"I began to fear that you were never coming to see me," he answered respectfully.

The assistants hurried in, eager to see the great man of the perfumery trade, their own master's partner, the deputy-mayor who wore the red ribbon. César was flattered by this mute homage, and he who had felt so small in the Kellers' bank must needs imitate the Kellers. He stroked his chin, raised himself on tiptoe once or twice with an air, and poured forth his commonplaces.

"Well, my dear fellow, are you up early in the mornings?" asked he.

"No, we don't always go to bed," said Popinot; "one must succeed by hook or by crook."

"Well, what did I tell you? My Oil is a fortune."

"Yes, sir; but the method of selling it counts for something: I have given your diamond a worthy setting."

"As a matter of fact," said the perfumer, "how are we getting on? Have any profits been made?"

"At the end of a month!" cried Popinot. "Did you expect it? My friend Gaudissart has not been gone much more than three weeks. He took a post-chaise without telling me about it. Oh! he has thrown himself into this. We shall owe a good deal to my uncle! The newspapers will cost us twelve thousand francs," he added in Birotteau's ear.

"The newspapers . . . !" cried the deputy-mayor.

"Have you not seen them?"

"No."

"Then you know nothing of this," said Popinot. "Twenty thousand francs in placards, frames, and prints! . . . A hun-

dred thousand bottles paid for! . . . Oh! it is nothing but sacrifice at this moment. We are bringing out the Oil on a large scale. If you had stepped over to the Faubourg, where I have often been at work all night, you would have seen a little contrivance of mine for cracking the nuts, which is not to be sneezed at. For my own part, during the last five days I have made three thousand francs in commission on the druggists' oils."

"What a good head!" said Birotteau, laying his hand on little Popinot's hair, and stroking it as if the young man had been a little child, "I foresaw how it would be."

Several people came into the shop.

"Good-by till Sunday; we are going to dine then with your aunt, Mme. Ragon," said Birotteau, and he left Popinot to his own affairs. Evidently the roast which he had scented was not yet ready to carve.—"How extraordinary it is! An assistant becomes a merchant in twenty-four hours," he thought, and Birotteau was as much taken aback by Popinot's prosperity and self-possession as by du Tillet's luxurious rooms. "Here is Anselme drawing himself up a bit when I put my hand on his head, as if he were a François Keller already."

It did not occur to Birotteau that the assistants were looking on, and that the head of an establishment must preserve his dignity in his own house. Here, as in du Tillet's case, the good man had made a blunder in the kindness of his heart, and the real feeling expressed in that homely familiar way would have mortified any one but Anselme.

The Sunday dinner-party at the Ragons' house was destined to be the last festivity in the nineteen years of César's married life, the life which had been so completely happy. The Ragons lived on the second floor of a quaint and rather stately old house in the Rue du Petit-Bourbon-Saint-Sulpice. Over the panelled walls of their rooms danced eighteenth century shepherdesses in hooped petticoats, amid browsing eighteenth century sheep; and the old people themselves belonged to the bourgeoisie of that bygone eighteenth cent-

ury, with its solemn gravity, its quaint habits and customs, its respectful attitude to the noblesse, its loyal devotion to Church and King.

The timepieces, the linen, the plates and dishes, all the furniture in fact, had such an old-world air, that by very reason of its antiquity it seemed new. The sitting-room, hung with brocatelle damask curtains, contained a collection of "duchesse" chairs and what-nots; and from the wall a superb Popinot, Mme. Ragon's father, the alderman of Sancerre, painted by Latour, smiled down upon the room like a parvenu in all his glory. Mme. Ragon at home was incomplete without her tiny King Charles, who reposed with marvellous effect on her hard little *rococo* sofa, a piece of furniture which certainly had never played the part of Crébillon's sofa.

Among the Ragons' many virtues, the possession of old wines arrived at perfect maturity was by no means the least endearing; to say nothing of certain liqueurs of Mme. Anfoux's, brought from the West Indies by the lovely Mme. Ragon's admirers, sufficiently dogged to love on without hope (so it was said). Wherefore the Ragons' little dinners were highly appreciated. Jeannette, the old cook, served the two old folk with a blind devotion; for them she would have stolen fruit to make preserves; and so far from investing her money in the savings-bank, she prudently put it in the lottery, hoping one day to carry home the great prize to her master and mistress. In spite of her sixty years, Jeannette, on Sundays when they had company, superintended the dishes in the kitchen, and waited at table with a deft quickness which would have given hints to Mlle. Contat as Suzanne in the "Marriage of Figaro."

This time the guests were ten in number—the elder Popinot, Uncle Pillerault, Anselme, César and his wife and daughter, the three Matifats, and the Abbé Loraux. Mme. Matifat, first introduced arrayed for the dance in her turban, now wore a gown of blue velvet, thick cotton stockings, kid slippers, green-fringed chamois leather gloves, and a hat lined with pink, and adorned with blossoming auriculas.

Every one had arrived by five o'clock. The Ragons used to beg their guests to be punctual; and when the good folk themselves were asked out to dinner, their friends were careful to dine at the same hour, for at the age of seventy the digestion does not take kindly to the new-fangled times and seasons ordained by fashionable society.

Césarine knew that Mme. Ragon would seat Anselme beside her; all women, even devotees, or the feeblest feminine intellects, understand each other in the matter of a love affair. The toilet of the perfumer's daughter was designed to turn young Popinot's head. Constance, who had given up, not without a pang, the idea of the notary, who for her was an heir-presumptive to a throne, had helped Césarine to dress, certain bitter reflections mingling with her thoughts the while. Foreseeing the future, she lowered the modest gauze kerchief somewhat on Césarine's shoulders, so as to display rather more of their outline, as well as the throat on which the young girl's head was set with striking grace. The bodice à la Grecque, four or five folds, crossing from left to right, gave short glimpses of delicately rounded contours beneath; and the leaden-gray merino gown, with its flounces trimmed with green ornaments, clearly defined a shape which had never seemed so slender and so lissome. Gold filagree earrings hung from her ears. Her hair, dressed high à la Chinoise, was drawn back from her face, so that the delicate freshness of its surface and the dim tracery of the veins which suffused the white velvet with the purest glow of life were apparent at a glance. Indeed, Césarine was so coquettishly lovely that Mme. Matifat could not help saying so, without perceiving that the mother and daughter had felt the necessity of bewitching young Popinot.

Neither Birotteau, nor his wife, nor Mme. Matifat, nor any one else, broke in upon the delicious talk between the two young people; love glowed within them as they spoke with lowered voices in the draughty window-seat, where the cold made a miniature northeaster. Moreover, the conversation of their seniors grew animated when the elder Popinot

let something drop concerning Roguin's flight, saying that this was the second notary-defaulter, and that hitherto such a thing had been unknown. Mme. Ragon had touched her brother's foot at the mention of Roguin, Pillerault had spoken aloud to cover the judge's remark, and both looked significantly from him to Mme. Birotteau.

"I know all," Constance said, and in her gentle voice there was a note of pain.

"Oh, well then," said Mme. Matifat, addressing herself to Birotteau, who humbly bent his head, "how much of your money did he run away with? To listen to the gossip, you might be ruined."

"He had two hundred thousand francs of mine. As for the forty thousand which he pretended to borrow for me from one of his clients whose money he had squandered, we are going to law about it."

"You will see that settled this coming week," said the elder Popinot. "I thought that you would not mind my explaining your position to M. le Président; he has ordered Roguin's papers to be brought into the Chambre de Conseil; on examination it will be discovered when the lender's capital was embezzled, and Derville's allegations can be proved or disproved. Derville is pleading in person, to save expense to you."

"Shall we gain the day?" asked Mme. Birotteau.

"I do not know," Popinot answered. "Although I belong to the Chamber before which the case will come, I shall refrain from deliberating upon it, even if I should be called upon to do so."

"But can there be any doubt about such a straightforward case?" asked Pillerault. "Ought not the deed to state that the money was actually paid down, and must not the notaries declare that they have seen it handed over? Roguin would go to the galleys if he fell into the hands of justice."

"In my opinion," the judge answered, "the lender should look to Roguin's caution-money and the amount paid for the practice for his remedy; but sometimes, in still simpler cases

than this, the Councillors at the Court-Royal have been divided six against six."

"What is this, mademoiselle; has M. Roguin run away?" asked Popinot, overhearing at last what was being said. "M. César said nothing about it to me—to me who would give my life for him . . ."

Césarine felt that the whole family was included in that "for him"; for if the girl's inexperience had not understood the tone, she could not mistake the look that wrapped her in a rosy flame.

"I was sure of it; I told him so, but he hid it all from mother, and told his secret to no one but me."

"You spoke to him of me in this matter," said Popinot; "you read my heart, but do you read all that is there?"

"Perhaps."

"Oh! I am very happy," said Popinot. "If you will remove all my fears, in a year's time I shall be so rich that your father will not receive me so badly when I shall speak to him then of our marriage. Five hours of sleep shall be enough for me now of a night . . ."

"Do not make yourself ill," said Césarine, and no words can reproduce the tones of her voice as she gave Popinot a glance wherein all her thoughts might be read.

"Wife," said César, as they rose from table, "I think those young people are in love."

"Oh, well, so much the better," said Constance gravely: "my daughter will be the wife of a man who has a head on his shoulders and plenty of energy. Brains are the best endowment in a marriage."

She hurried away into Mme. Ragon's room. During dinner, César had let fall several remarks which had drawn a smile from Pillerault and the judge, so plainly did they exhibit the speaker's ignorance; and it was borne in upon the unfortunate woman how little fitted her husband was to struggle with misfortune. Constance's heart was heavy with unshed tears. Instinctively she mistrusted du Tillet, for all mothers understand *timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* without

learning Latin. She wept, and her daughter and Mme. Ragon, with their arms about her, could not learn the cause of her trouble.

"It is the nerves," said she.

The rest of the evening was spent over the card-table by the old people, and the younger ones played the blithe childish games styled "innocent amusements," because they cover the innocent mischief of bourgeois lovers. The Matifats joined the young people.

"César," said Constance, as they went home again, "go to M. le Baron de Nucingen some time about the 8th, so as to be sure some days beforehand that you can meet your engagements on the 15th. If there should be any hitch in your arrangements, would you raise a loan one day to pay your debts between one day and the next?"

"I will go, wife," César answered, and he grasped her hand and Césarine's in his as he added, "My darlings, I have given you bitter New Year's gifts!" And in the darkness inside the cab the two women, who could not see the poor perfumer, felt hot tears falling on their hands.

"Hope, dear," said Constance.

"Everything will go well, papa; M. Popinot told me that he would give his life for you."

"For me—and for my family; that is it, is it not?" answered César, trying to speak gayly.

Césarine pressed her father's hand in a way which told him that Anselme was her betrothed.

Two hundred cards arrived for Birotteau on New Year's Day and the two following days. This influx of tokens of favor and of false friendship is a painful thing for people who are being swept away by the current of misfortune. Three times César presented himself at the Baron de Nucingen's hotel, and each time in vain. The New Year's festivities sufficiently excused the banker's absence. But on the last visit Birotteau went as far as the banker's private office, and learned from a German, the head clerk, that M. de Nucingen had only returned from a ball given by the Kellers

at five o'clock that morning, and that he would not be visible until half-past nine. Birotteau chatted with this man for nearly half an hour, and contrived to interest the German in his affairs. So, during the day, this cabinet minister of the House of Nucingen wrote to tell César that the Baron would see him at twelve o'clock the following morning, January the 3d. Although every hour brought its drop of bitterness, that day went by with dreadful swiftness. The perfumer took a cab and drove to the hotel; the courtyard was already blocked with carriages, and the poor honest man's heart was oppressed by the splendors of that celebrated house.

"Yet he has failed twice," he said to himself, as he went up the handsome staircase, with flowers on either side, and through the luxuriously furnished rooms by which the Baroness, Delphine de Nucingen, had made a name for herself. The Baroness strove to rival the most splendid houses in the Faubourg Saint-Germain—the houses of a circle into which as yet she had no right of entry.

The Baron and his wife were at breakfast. In spite of the number of those who were waiting in his offices for him, he said that he would see du Tillet's friends at any hour. Birotteau trembled with hope at the change which the Baron's message produced on the lackey's insolent face.

"Bardon me, my tear," said the Baron, addressing his wife, as he rose to his feet and bowed slightly to Birotteau, "dees shentleman ees ein goot Royaleest, and de indimate frient of du Dillet. Meinnesir Pirodot is teputy-mayor of de Second Arrontussement, and gifs palls of Asiatic magnificence; you vill make, no doubt, his agquaintance mit bleasure."

"I should be delighted to take lessons of Mme. Birotteau, for Ferdinand—" ("Come," thought the perfumer, "she calls him Ferdinand, plump and plain")—"Ferdinand spoke of the ball to us with an admiration which says the more, because Ferdinand is very critical; everything must have

been perfect. Shall you soon give another?" asked Mme. de Nucingen, with a most amiable expression.

"Madame, poor folk like us seldom amuse ourselves," answered the perfumer, doubtful whether the Baroness were laughing at him, or if her words were simply an empty compliment.

"Meinnesir Crintod suberindended de alderations in your house," said the Baron.

"Oh! Grindot! is he that nice young architect who has just come back from Rome?" asked Delphine de Nucingen. "I am quite wild about him; he is making lovely sketches for my album."

No conspirator in the hands of the executioner in the torture chamber of the Venetian Republic could have felt less at his ease in the boots than Birotteau in his ordinary clothes at that moment. Every word had for him an ironical sound.

"Ve too gif liddle palls here," the Baron continued, giving the visitor a searching glance. "Eferypody does it, you see!"

"Will M. Birotteau join us at breakfast?" asked Delphine, and indicated the luxuriously-furnished table.

"I am here on business, Mme. la Baronne, and—"

"Yes!" said the Baron, "Matame, vill you bermit us to talk pizness?"

Delphine made a little gesture of assent. "Are you about to buy some perfumery?" she asked of the Baron, who shrugged his shoulders, and turned in despair to César.

"Du Dillet take de greatest inderest in you," said he.

"At last we are coming to the point," thought the hapless merchant.

"Mit his ledder, your gretid mit my house is only limited py de pounds of my own fortune . . ."

The life-giving draught which the angel bore to Hagar in the wilderness must surely have been like the dew which these outlandish words effused through Birotteau's veins. The cunning Baron clung of set purpose to the horrible accent of the German Jew, who flatters himself that he has

mastered an alien tongue; for this system led to misapprehensions highly useful to him in the way of business.

"And you shall have ein gurrent aggount, dat is how we vill do it," remarked the good, the great, and venerable financier, with Alsatian geniality.

Birotteau's doubts were all laid to rest; he had had experience of business, and he knew that a man never goes into details unless he is disposed to oblige you and to carry out a plan.

"I neet not say to you that the Pank demands dree zignatures off eferypody, gif de amount is large or small. So you shall make all your pills to de order off our friend du Dillet, who vill send dem de same day to de Pank mit my zignature, and py four o'glock you shall have de amount of de pills dat you haf accept in de morning, and at Pank rate. I do not vant gommission nor discount—nor nossing; for I shall haf de bleasure of peing agreeable to you. . . . But I make one gondition!" he added, touching his nose with the forefinger of his left hand, and putting an indescribable cunning into the gesture.

"It is granted before you ask it, M. le Baron," said Birotteau, imagining that the banker meant to stipulate for a share in the profits.

"Ein gondition to vich I addach de greatest price, because I should like Montame de Nichinguenne to take, as she has said, some lessons of Montame Pirodot."

"M. le Baron, do not laugh at me, I beg."

"Meinnesir Pirodot," said the financier seriously, "it is an agreement; you are to infite us to your next pall. My wife is chealous; she would like to see your house, of vich eferypody says such great dings."

"M. le Baron!"

"Oh! if you refuse me, no loan aggount! You are in great favor. Yes! I know dat de Brefect of de Seine was go to you."

"M. le Baron!"

"You had La Pillartière, ein shentleman-in-ordinary to

de King; and de goot Fentéheine, for you were wounded—at Sainte—"

"On the 13th of Vendémiaire, M. le Baron."

"You had Meinnesir de Lassebette, Meinnesir Fauqueleine of de Agademie—"

"M. le Baron!"

"Eh! *der teufel*, do not be so modest, Meester Teputy-Mayor; I haf heard dat de King said dat your pall—"

"The King?" asked Birotteau, destined to learn no more, for at this moment a young man came into the room; the sound of his footsteps, heard at a distance, had brought a bright color into Delphine de Nucingen's fair face.

"Goot-tay, my tear de Marsay," said the Baron. "Take my blace; dere are a lot of beoples in my office, dey say. Who knows why? De Mines off Wortschinne are baying two hunderd ber cent! Yes. I have receifed de aggounts. You haf a hunderd tousand francs more of ingom dis year, Montame de Nichinguenne; you could buy girdles and kewkaws to make yourself pretty, as if you neeted dem!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Birotteau. "The Ragons have sold their shares!"

"Who may these gentlemen be?" asked the young dandy with a smile.

"Dere!" said Nucingen, who had gone as far as the door already, "it looks to me as if dose bersons . . . Te Marsay, dis is Meinnesir Pirodot, your berfumer, who gifs palls mit Asiatic magnificence, and has been degoraded py de King—"

De Marsay, taking up his eyeglass, remarked, "Ah! to be sure. I thought that the face was familiar. Then are you about to perfume your affairs with some efficacious oil, to make them run smoothly?"

"Ach! vell, dose Rakkons had an aggount mit me," the Baron went on. "I put dem in de vay of ein fortune, and dey could not vait one more day for it."

"M. le Baron!" cried Birotteau.

The worthy perfumer found himself very much in the

dark about his affairs, and fled after the banker without taking leave of the Baroness or of de Marsay. M. de Nucingen was on the lowest step of the stairs, but even as he reached the door of his office, Birotteau was beside him. As he turned the handle, he saw the despairing gesture of the poor creature, for whom the gulf was yawning, and said: "Eh! it is understood, is it not? See du Dillet, and arranche it all mit him."

It occurred to Birotteau that de Marsay might have some influence with the Baron; he darted upstairs with the speed of a swallow, and slipped into the dining-room where, by rights, the Baroness and de Marsay should have been, for he had left Delphine waiting for her coffee and cream. The coffee indeed was now waiting, but the Baroness and the young dandy had vanished; the servant looked amused at Birotteau's astonishment, and there was nothing for it but to go more leisurely downstairs again. From the Nucingens' hotel he went at once to du Tillet, only to hear that he was at Mme. Roguin's house in the country. He took a cab, and paid an extra fare to be driven to Nogent-sur-Marne as quickly as if he had travelled post. But at Nogent-sur-Marne the porter told him that *Monsieur and Madame* had set out for Paris, and Birotteau returned quite tired out.

When he told his wife and daughter the story of his excursion, he was amazed to receive the sweetest consolation and assurances that all would go well from Constance, who had always taken all the little ups and downs of business as occasions on which to utter her boding cries.

At seven o'clock the next morning, Birotteau took up his position before du Tillet's door in the dim light. He begged the porter to put him into communication with du Tillet's man, and, by dint of slipping ten francs into the porter's hands, obtained the favor of an interview with du Tillet's man; of him he asked to give him an interview with du Tillet as soon as du Tillet should be visible, and to that end a couple of gold pieces found their way into the possession of du Tillet's man. By way of these little sacrifices

and great humiliations, common to courtiers and petitioners, he attained his end. At half-past eight, when his ex-assistant had slipped on a dressing-gown and shaken off the confused ideas of a man awakened from sleep, had yawned, stretched himself, and asked pardon of his old master, Birotteau found himself face to face with the tiger thirsting for revenge, the man whom he was fain to consider as his one friend in the world.

"Do not mind me," said Birotteau, replying to the apology.

"What do you want, *my good César?*" asked du Tillet; and César, not without terrible palpitations, gave the Baron de Nucingen's answer and demands to an inattentive listener, who looked about for the bellows, and scolded the man-servant for taking so long over lighting the fire.

César did not notice at first that if the master was not heedful the man was interested; but seeing this at last, he grew confused and broke off, to begin again, spurred on by a "Go on, go on; I am listening," from the abstracted banker.

The good man's shirt was soaked with perspiration, which turned icy cold when du Tillet looked full and steadily at him, and he could see those eyes of silver streaked with a few gold threads; there was a diabolical light in them which pierced him to the heart.

"My dear master, the Bank refused your paper, passed on to Gigonnet *without guarantee* by the firm of Claparon; is that my fault? What! you have been a judge at the Consular Tribunal, how could you make such blunders? I am, before all things, a banker. I will give you my money, but I could not expose my signature to a refusal from the Bank. I live by credit. So do we all. Do you want money?"

"Can you let me have all that I need in cash?"

"That depends upon the amount to be paid. How much do you want?"

"Thirty thousand francs."

"Plenty of chimney-pots tumbling about my ears!" exclaimed du Tillet, and he burst into a laugh.

The perfumer, misled by the splendor of du Tillet's surroundings, chose to regard that laugh as a sign that the sum was a mere trifle. He breathed again. Du Tillet rang the bell.

"Tell the cashier to come up."

"He is not here yet, sir," the servant answered.

"Those rogues are laughing at me! It is half-past eight; they ought to have done a million francs' worth of business by now."

Five minutes later, M. Legras came upstairs.

"How much have we in the safe?"

"Only twenty thousand francs. Your orders were to buy thirty thousand livres per annum in *rentes*, at present price, payable on the 15th."

"That is right; I am still asleep."

The cashier gave Birotteau a sly glance, and went.

"If truth were banished from the earth, she would leave her last word with a cashier," said du Tillet. "But have you not an interest in little Popinot's business, now that he has just set up for himself?" he added, after a horrible pause, in which the sweat gathered in drops on Birotteau's forehead.

"Yes," said César innocently. "Do you think you could discount his signature for a fair amount?"

"Bring me fifty thousand francs' worth of his acceptances, and I will get them negotiated for you at a reasonable rate by one Gobseck; very easy to do business with when he has plenty of capital on his hands, and he has a good deal just now."

Birotteau went home again heartbroken. He did not see that bankers and bill-discounters were sending him backward and forward in a game of battledore and shuttlecock; but Constance guessed even then that it would be impossible to obtain a loan of any sort. If three bankers had already refused credit to a man as well known as the deputy-mayor,

every one would hear of it, and the Bank of France was no longer to be thought of.

"Try to renew" (this was Constance's advice). "Go to your co-associate, M. Claparon, to every one, in fact, whose bills fall due on the 15th, and ask them to renew. There will be time enough then to go to bill-discounters with Popinot's bills."

"To-morrow will be the 13th!" exclaimed Birotteau, worn out with anxiety.

He was "endowed with a sanguine temperament," to quote his own prospectus; a temperament upon which the wear and tear of emotion and of thought tells so enormously that sleep is imperatively needed to repair the waste. Césarine brought her father into the drawing-room, and played "Rousseau's Dream," that charming composition of Hérold's, while Constance sat sewing by her husband's side. The poor man lay back on the ottoman couch. Every time his eyes rested on his wife he saw a sweet smile on her lips, and so he fell asleep.

"Poor man!" said Constance. "What torture is in store for him! . . . If only he can endure it!"

"Oh, mamma, what is it?" asked Césarine, seeing her mother in tears.

"I see bankruptcy ahead, darling. If your father is obliged to file his schedule, there must be no asking for pity of any one. You must be prepared to be an ordinary shopgirl, my dear. If I see you doing your part bravely, I shall have strength to begin life again. I know your father; he will not keep back one farthing; I shall give up my claims, all that we have will be sold. Take your clothes and trinkets to-morrow to Uncle Pillerault; you are not bound to lose anything, my child."

At these words, spoken with such devout sincerity, Césarine's terror knew no bounds. She thought of going to Anselme, but a feeling of delicacy withheld her.

The next morning found Birotteau in the Rue de Provence at nine o'clock. He had fallen a victim to fresh anxi-

eties of a totally different kind. To borrow money is not necessarily a complicated process in business; it is a matter of daily occurrence, for capital must always be found wherever a new enterprise is started; but to ask a man to renew a bill is in commercial circles what the Police Court is to the Court of Assize; it is a first step to bankruptcy, even as a misdemeanor is half-way to a crime. The secret of your weakness and your embarrassment passes out of your own keeping. A merchant delivers himself up, bound hand and foot, to another merchant, and charity is not a virtue much practiced on the Stock Exchange.

The perfumer, who hitherto had walked the streets of Paris with bright confident eyes, now cast down by doubts, hesitated to go to Claparon; he was beginning to understand that with bankers the heart is merely a portion of the internal economy. Claparon had seemed to him so brutal in his coarse hilarity, and he had felt so much vulgarity in the man, that he shrank from approaching this creditor.

"He is nearer the people, perhaps he will have more soul!" This was the first word of accusation which the anguish of his position wrung from him.

César glanced up at the windows, and at the green curtains yellowed by the sun; then he drew the last of his stock of courage up from the depths of his soul, and climbed the stairs that led to a shabby mezzanine floor. He read the word *office*, engraven in black letters on an oval brass-plate upon the door, and knocked. No one answered, so he went in.

The whole place was something more than humble; it savored of dire poverty, avarice, or neglect. No clerk showed his face behind a barrier of unpainted deal, surmounted at elbow height by a brass wire lattice, an arrangement which screened off an inner space occupied by tables and desks of blackened wood. Scattered about the deserted offices lay inkstands, in which mould was growing, quill-pens touzled like a street urchin's head, twisted up into suns with rays; the rooms were littered with cardboard

cases, papers, and circulars, useless no doubt. The floor of the lobby was as worn, as damp and gritty as the floor of a lodging-house parlor. Through a door on which the word *Counting-house* was inscribed, the visitor entered a second room, where everything was in keeping with the sinister waggery displayed in the first. In one corner stood a large cage of oak with a grill of copper-wire, and a cashier's sliding window. An enormous iron letter-box had doubtless been abandoned to the rats for a playground. The open door of this cage gave a view of yet another of these whimsical offices, and of a shabby and worm-eaten green chair, a mass of horsehair escaping through a hole underneath this piece of furniture in countless corkscrew curls that called its owner's wig to mind. Evidently this room had been the drawing-room of the house before it had been converted into offices, but the only attempt at ornamental furniture was a round table covered with a green cloth, and some old chairs covered with black leather and adorned with gilt nail-heads which stood about it. The chimney-piece had some pretensions to elegance, the hearthstone was unblackened, and there were no visible signs that a fire had been lighted there. The pier-glass above it, tarnished with fly-spots, had a mean look, so had a mahogany clock-case bought at the sale of some departed notary's office furniture, a dreary object which enhanced the depressing effect of the pair of empty candlesticks and the all-pervading sticky grime. The dinginess of the paper on the walls, drab with a rose-colored border, spoke plainly of the habitual presence of smokers and absence of ventilation. The whole stale-looking room resembled nothing so much as a newspaper editor's office. Birotteau, afraid of intruding on the banker's privacy, gave three sharp taps on the door opposite the one by which he had entered.

"Come in!" cried Claparon, and the sound of his voice evidently came from a room beyond. The perfumer could hear a good fire crackling on the hearth, but the banker was not there. This apartment did duty, as a matter of fact,

for a private office. François Keller's elegantly furnished sanctum differed from the grotesque neglect of this sham capitalist's surroundings as widely as Versailles differs from the wigwam of a Huron chief; and Birotteau, who had beheld the glories of the banking world, was about to be introduced to its blackguardism.

In a sort of oblong den, contrived behind the private office, where the whole of the furniture, scarcely elegant in its prime, had been battered, broken, covered with grease, slit to rags, soiled and spoiled by the slovenly habits of the occupier, reclined Claparon, who, at sight of Birotteau, flung on a filthy dressing-gown, laid down his pipe, and drew the bed-curtains with a haste that seemed suspicious even to the innocent perfumer.

"Take a seat, sir," said du Tillet's banker puppet.

Claparon without his wig, his head tied up in a bandanna handkerchief all awry, was to Birotteau's thinking the more repulsive in that his loose dressing-gown gave glimpses of a nondescript knitted woollen garment, once white, but now a dingy brown, from indefinitely prolonged wear.

"Will you breakfast with me?" asked Claparon, bethinking himself of the ball, and prompted partly by a wish to turn the tables on his host, partly by anxiety to put Birotteau off the scent. And, in point of fact, a round table, hastily cleared of papers, was suspiciously suggestive; for it displayed a pâté, oysters, white wine, and a dish of vulgar kidneys, *sautés au vin de Champagne*, cooling in their gravy, while an omelet with truffles was browning before the sea-coal fire. The table was set for two persons; two table-napkins, soiled at supper on the previous evening, would have enlightened the purest innocence. Claparon, in the character of a man who has a belief in his own adroitness, insisted in spite of Birotteau's refusals.

"I should by rights have had somebody to breakfast, but that somebody has not kept the appointment," cried the cunning commercial traveller, speaking loud, so that the

words might reach the ears of an auditor hiding under the blankets.

"I have come on business pure and simple, sir," said Birotteau, "and I shall not detain you long."

"I am overwhelmed with business," returned Claparon, pointing to a cylinder desk and to the tables, which were heaped up with papers, "not a poor little minute may I have to myself. I never see people except on Saturdays; but for you, my dear sir, I am always at home. I have no time left nowadays for love-affairs or lounging about; I am losing the business instinct, which takes intervals of carefully-timed idleness, if it is to keep its freshness. Nobody sees me busy doing nothing in the boulevards. Pshaw! business bores me, I don't care to hear any more about business at present; I have money enough, and I shall never have pleasure enough. My word, I have a mind to turn tourist and see Italy. Ah! beloved Italy! fair even amid her adversity, adorable land, where, doubtless, I shall find some magnificent, indolent Italian beauty; I have always admired Italian women! Have you ever had an Italian mistress? No? Oh, well, come to Italy with me. We will see Venice, the city of the Doges, fallen, more's the pity, into the hands of those philistines the Austrians, who know nothing of art. Pooh! let us leave business, and canals, and loans, and governments in peace. I am a prince when my pockets are well lined. Let us travel, by Jove!"

"Just one word, sir, and I will go," said Birotteau. "You passed my bills on to M. Bidault."

"Gigonnet, you mean; nice little fellow Gigonnet; a man as easy-going as a—as a slip-knot."

"Yes," said César. "I should be glad—and in this matter I am relying on your integrity and honor—(Claparon bowed)—I should be glad if I could renew—"

"Impossible," said the banker roundly—"impossible. I am not the only man in the affair. We are all in council, 'tis a regular Chamber; but that we are all on good terms among ourselves, like rashers in a pan. Oh, we deliberate, that we

do! The building-land by the Madeleine is nothing; we are doing other things elsewhere. Eh! my good sir, if we were not busy in the Champs-Elysées, near the new Exchange which has just been finished, in the Quartier Saint-Lazare and about the Tivoli, we should not be *vinanciers*, as old Nucingen says. So what is the Madeleine? A little speck of a business. Prrr! we do not dabble, my good sir," he said, tapping Birotteau's chest, and giving him a hug. "There, come and have your breakfast, and we will have a talk," Claparon continued, by way of softening his refusal.

"By all means," said Birotteau.—"So much the worse for the other," thought he. He would wait till the wine went to Claparon's head, and find out then who his partners really were in this affair, which began to have a very shady look.

"That is right!—Victoire!" shouted the banker, and at the call appeared a genuine Leonarda, tricked out like a fish-wife.

"Tell the clerks that I cannot see anybody, not even Nucingen, Keller, Gigonnet, and the rest of them!"

"There is no one here but M. Lempereur."

"He can receive the fashionables," said Claparon, "and the small fry need not go beyond the public office. They can be told that I am meditating how to get a pull—at a bottle of champagne."

To make an old commercial traveller tipsy is to achieve the impossible. César had mistaken his boon companion's symptoms, and thought his boisterous vulgarity was due to intoxication, when he tried to shrive him.

"There is that rascal Roguin still in it with you," said Birotteau; "ought you not to write and tell him to help out a friend whom he has left in the lurch, a friend with whom he dined every Sunday, and whom he has known for twenty years?"

"Roguin? A fool; we have his share. Don't be downhearted, my good friend, it will be all right. Pay on the 15th, and that done, we shall see! I say, 'we shall see'—

(a glass of wine!)—but the capital is no concern of mine whatever. Oh! if you should not pay at all, *I* should not give you black looks; my share in the affair is limited to a percentage on the purchase money, and something down on the completion of the contract, in consideration of which I brought round the vendors. . . . Do you understand? Your associates are good men, so I am not afraid, my dear sir. Business is so divided up nowadays. Every business requires the co-operation of so many specialists! Do you join the rest of us? Then do not dabble in combs and pomade pots—a paltry way of doing business; fleece the public, and go in for the speculation."

"A speculation?" asked the perfumer; "what sort of business is it?"

"It is commerce in the abstract," replied Claparon, "an affair which will only come to light in ten years' time at the bidding of the great Nucingen, the Napoleon of finance, a scheme by which a man embraces sum-totals, and skims the cream of profits yet to be made; a gigantic conception, a method of marking expectations like timber for annual felling; it is a new cabal, in short. There are but ten or twelve of us as yet, long-headed men, all initiated into the cabalistic secrets of these magnificent combinations."

César opened his eyes and ears, trying to comprehend these mixed metaphors.

"Listen to me," Claparon continued, after a pause; "such strokes as these need capable men. Now, there is the man who has ideas, but has not a penny, like all men with ideas. That sort of man spends and is spent, and cares for nothing. Imagine a pig roaming about a wood for truffles, and a knowing fellow on his tracks; that is the man with the money, who waits till he hears a grunt over a find. When the man with the ideas has hit upon a good notion, the man with the money taps him on the shoulder with a 'What is this? You are putting yourself in the furnace-mouth, my good friend; your back is not strong enough to carry this; here are a thousand francs for you, and let *me* put this affair in working order.'

Good! Then the banker summons the manufacturers—'Set to work, my friends! Out with your prospectuses! Blarney to the death!' Out come the hunting-horns, and they pipe up with 'A hundred thousand francs for five sous!'—or five sous for a hundred thousand francs, gold-mines, coal-mines; all the flourishes and alarms of commerce, in short. Art and science are paid to give their opinion, the affair is paraded about, the public rushes into it, and receives paper for its money, and our takings are in our hands. The pig is safe in his sty with his potatoes, and the rest of them are wallowing in bills of exchange. That is how it is done, my dear sir. Go in for speculation. What do you want to be? A pig or a gull, a clown or a millionnaire? Think it over. I have summed up the modern theory of loans for you. Come to see me; you will find a good fellow, always jolly. French joviality, at once grave and gay, does no harm in business, quite the contrary! Men who can drink are made to understand each other. Come! another glass of champagne? It is choice wine, eh? It was sent me by a man at Epernay, for whom I have sold a good deal of it, and at good prices too (I used to be in the wine trade). He shows his gratitude, and remembers me in my prosperity. A rare trait."

Birotteau, bewildered by this flippancy and careless tone in a man whom everybody credited with such astonishing profundity and breadth, did not dare to question him any further. But in spite of the confusion and excitement induced by unwonted potations of champagne, a name let fall by du Tillet came up in his mind, and he asked for the address of a bill-discounter named Gobseck.

"Is that what you are after, my dear sir?" asked Claparon. "Gobseck is a bill-discounter in the same sense that the hangman is a doctor. The first thing that he says to you is 'Fifty per cent.' He belongs to the school of Harpagon; he will supply you with canary birds, and stuffed boa-constrictors, with furs in summer and nankin in winter. And whose bills are you going to offer him? He will want you

to deposit your wife, your daughter, your umbrella, and everything that is yours, down to your hat-box, your clogs (do you wear hinged clogs?), poker and tongs, and the firewood in your cellar, before he will take your bills with your bare name to them! . . . Gobseck! Gobseck! In the name of misfortune, who sent you to the guillotine of commerce?"

"M. du Tillet."

"Oh! the rogue; just like him. We used to be friends once upon a time; and if the quarrel has gone so far that we do not speak to each other now, I have good reason for disliking him, believe me! He let me see to the bottom of his soul of mud, and he made me uncomfortable at that fine ball you gave. I cannot bear him, with the coxcomb's airs he gives himself, because he has the good graces of a *notaresse!* I could have Marquises myself if I had a mind; he will never have my esteem, I know. Ah! my esteem is a princess who will never take up too much room on his pillow. I say though, old man, you are a funny one to give us a ball, and then come and ask us to renew two months afterward! You are likely to go far. Let us go into speculation together. You have a character; it would be useful to me. Oh! du Tillet was born to understand Gobseck. Du Tillet will come to a bad end in the Place du Grève. If, as they say, he is one of Gobseck's lambs, he will soon come to the length of his tether. Gobseck squats in a corner of his web like an old spider who has seen the world. Sooner or later, *zut!* and the money-lender sucks in his man like a glass of wine. So much the better! Du Tillet played me a trick—oh! a scurvy trick!"

After an hour and a half spent in listening to meaningless prate, Birotteau determined to go, for the commercial traveller was preparing to relate the adventure of a representative of the people at Marseilles, who had fallen in love with an actress who played the part of "La belle Arsène." The Royalist pit hissed the lady.

"Up he gets," said Claparon, "and stands bolt upright in his box. 'Arté dui l'a siblée?' says he; 'eu! . . . Si

c'est oune femme, je l'amprise; si c'est oune homme, nous se verrons; si c'est ni l'un ni l'autte, que le troun di Diou le cure!' . . . How do you think the adventure ended?"

"Good-day, sir," said Birotteau.

"You will have to come and see me," said Claparon at this. "Cayron's first bill has come back protested, and I am the indorser; I have reimbursed the money, and I shall send it on to you, for business is business."

Birotteau felt this cool affectation of a readiness to oblige, as he had already felt Keller's hardness and Nucingen's Teutonic banter, in his very heart. The man's familiarity, his grotesque confidences made in the generous glow of champagne, had been like a blight to the perfumer; he felt as if he were leaving some evil haunt in the world financial.

He walked downstairs; he found himself in the streets and went, not knowing whither he went. He followed the Boulevard till he reached the Rue Saint-Denis, then he bethought himself of Molineux, and turned to go toward the Cour Batave. He mounted the same dirty tortuous staircase which he had ascended but lately in the pride of his glory. He remembered Molineux's peevish meanness, and winced at the thought of asking a favor of him. As on the occasion of his previous visit, he found the owner of house property by the fireside, but this time he had eaten his breakfast. Birotteau formulated his demand.

"Renew a bill for twelve hundred francs?" said Molineux, with an incredulous smile. "You do not mean it, sir. If you have not twelve hundred francs on the 15th to meet my bill, will you please to send me back my receipt for rent that has not been paid? Ah! I should be angry; I do not use the slightest ceremony in money matters; my rents are my income. If I acted otherwise, how should I pay my way? A man in business will not disapprove of that wholesome rule. Money knows nobody; money has no ears; money has no heart. It is a cold winter, and here is firewood dearer again. If you do not pay on the 15th, you will receive a little summons by noon on the 16th.

Pshaw! old Mitral, who serves your processes, acts for me too; he will send you your summons in an envelope, with due regard for your high position."

"A writ has never been served on me, sir," said Birotteau.

"Everything must have a beginning," retorted Molineux.

The perfumer was taken aback by the little old man's frank ferocity; the knell of credit rang in his ears; and every fresh stroke awoke memories of his own sayings as to bankruptcies, prompted by his remorseless jurisprudence. Those opinions of his seemed to be traced in letters of fire on the soft substance of his brain.

"By the by," Molineux was saying, "you forgot to write 'For value received in rent' across your bills; that might give me a preferential claim."

"My position forbids me to do anything to the prejudice of my creditors," said Birotteau, dazed by that glimpse into the gulf before him.

"Good, sir, very good. I thought that I had nothing left to learn in my dealings with messieurs my tenants. You have taught me never to take bills in payment. Oh! I will take the thing into Court, for your answer as good as tells me that you will not meet your engagements. The case touches every landlord in Paris."

Birotteau went out, sick of life. Feeble and tender natures lose heart at the first rebuff, just as a first success puts courage into them. César's only hope now lay in little Popinot's devotion; his thoughts naturally turned to him as he passed the Marché des Innocents.

"Poor boy! who would have told me this when I started him six weeks ago at the Tuileries."

It was nearly four o'clock, the time when the magistrates leave the Palais. As it fell out, the elder Popinot had gone to see his nephew. The examining magistrate, who in moral questions had a kind of second-sight which laid bare the secret motives of others, who discerned the underlying significance of the most commonplace actions of daily life, the

germs of crime, the roots of a misdemeanor, was watching Birotteau, though Birotteau did not suspect it. Birotteau seemed to be put out by finding the uncle with the nephew; the perfumer's manner was constrained, he was preoccupied and thoughtful. Little Popinot, busy as usual with his pen behind his ear, always fell flat, figuratively speaking, before Césarine's father. César's meaningless remarks to his partner, to the judge's thinking, were merely screens, some important demand was about to be made. Instead of leaving the shop, therefore, the shrewd man of law stayed with his nephew in spite of his nephew, for he thought that César would try to get rid of him by making a move himself. And so it was. When Birotteau had gone, the judge followed, but he noticed César lounging along the Rue des Cinq-Diamants in the direction of the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher. This infinitely small matter bred suspicion in the mind of Popinot the elder; he mistrusted César's intentions, went along the Rue des Lombards, watched the perfumer go back to Anselme's shop, and promptly repaired thither.

"My dear Popinot," César had begun, "I have come to ask you to do me a service."

"What is there to be done?" asked Popinot, with generous eagerness.

"Ah! you give me life!" cried the good man, rejoicing in this warmth from the heart that sent a glow through him after those twenty-five days of glacial cold. "It is this, to allow me to draw a bill on you on account of my share of the profits; we will settle between ourselves."

Popinot looked steadily at César; César lowered his eyes. Just at that moment the magistrate reappeared.

"My boy—Oh! I beg your pardon, M. Birotteau—my boy, I forgot to say . . ." and with the imperative gesture learned in the exercise of his profession, the elder Popinot drew his nephew out into the street, and marched him, bareheaded and in shirt-sleeves as he was, in the direction of the Rue des Lombards.

"Your old master will very likely find himself in such

straits that he may be forced to file his schedule, nephew. Before a man comes to that, a man who, maybe, has a record of forty years of upright dealing, nay the very best of men, in his anxiety to save his honor, will behave like the most frantic gambler. Men in that predicament will do anything. They will sell their wives and traffic in their daughters; they will bring their best friends into the scrape, and pawn property which is not theirs; they will go to the gaming-table, turn actors—nay, liars; they will shed tears at need. In short, I have known them do the most extraordinary things. You yourself know how good-natured Roguin was, a man who looked as though butter would not melt in his mouth. I do not press these conclusions home in M. Birotteau's case; I believe that he is honest; but if he should ask you to do anything at all irregular, no matter what it is; if he should want you, for instance, to accept accommodation bills, and so start you in a system which, to my way of thinking, is the beginning of all sorts of rascality (for it is counterfeit paper-money), promise me that you will sign nothing without first consulting me. You must remember that if you love his daughter, even for your own sake and hers, you must not spoil your future. If M. Birotteau must come to grief, what is the use of going with him? What is it but cutting yourselves off from all chance of escape through your business, which will be his refuge?"

"Thank you, uncle; a word to the wise is sufficient," said Anselme; his uncle's words explained that heartrending cry from his master.

The merchant who dealt in druggists' oils and sundries looked thoughtful as he entered his dark shop. Birotteau saw the change.

"Will you honor me by coming up to my room? we can talk more at our ease there than here. The assistants, busy as they are, might overhear us."

Birotteau followed Popinot, a victim to such cruel suspense as the condemned man knows, while he waits for a reprieve or the rejection of his appeal.

"My dear benefactor," Anselme began, "you do not doubt my devotion; it is blind. Permit me to ask but one thing, will this sum of money save you once and for all? Or will it merely put off some catastrophe? in which case, what is the use of carrying me with you? You want bills at ninety days. Very well, but I am sure that I myself shall not be able to meet them in three months' time."

Birotteau, white and grave, rose to his feet, and looked into Popinot's face.

Popinot, in alarm, cried, "I will do it if you wish it."

"Ungrateful boy!" cried the perfumer, gathering all his strength to hurl at Anselme the words which should brand him as infamous.

Birotteau walked to the door and went. Popinot, recovering from the sensation which the terrible words had produced in him, darted downstairs and rushed into the street, but saw no sign of the perfumer. The dreadful words of doom rang in the ears of Césarine's lover, poor César's face of anguish was always before his eyes; he lived, indeed, like Hamlet, haunted by a ghastly spectre.

Birotteau staggered along the streets like a drunken man. He found himself at last on the Quai, and followed its course to Sèvres, where he spent the night in an inn, stupefied with sorrow; and his frightened wife dared not make any inquiries for him. Under such circumstances, it is fatal to give the alarm rashly. Constance wisely immolated her anxiety to her husband's business reputation; she sat up all night for him, mingling prayers with her fears. Was César dead? Had he left Paris in the pursuit of some last hope? When morning came, she behaved as though she knew the cause of his absence; but when at five o'clock César had not returned, she sent word to her uncle and begged him to go to the Morgue. All through that day the brave woman sat at her desk, her daughter doing her embroidery by her side, and, neither sad nor smiling, both confronted the public with quiet faces.

When Pillerault came, he brought César with him; he

had met his niece's husband after 'Change in the Palais Royal, hesitating to enter a gaming-house. That day was the 14th.

César could eat nothing at dinner. His stomach, too violently contracted, rejected food. It was a miserable meal; but it was not so bad as the evening that came after it. For the hundredth time, the merchant experienced one of the hideous alternations of despair and hope which wear out weak natures, when the soul passes through the whole scale of sensations, from the highest pitch of joy to the lowest depths of despair. Derville, the consulting barrister, rushed into the splendid drawing-room. Mme. César had done everything in her power to keep her poor husband there; he had wanted to sleep in the attic, "so as not to see the monuments of my folly," he said.

"We have gained the day," cried Derville.

At those words the lines in César's face were smoothed out, but his joy alarmed Pillerault and Derville. The two frightened women went away to cry in Césarine's room.

"Now I can borrow on the property!" exclaimed the perfumer.

"It would not be wise to do so," said Derville; "they have given notice of appeal, the Court-Royal may reverse the decision, but we shall know in a month's time."

"A month!"

César sank into a lethargy, from which no one attempted to rouse him. This species of intermittent catalepsy, during which the body lives and suffers while the action of the mind is suspended, this fortuitous respite from mental anguish, was regarded as a godsend by Constance, Césarine, Pillerault, and Derville—and they were right. In this way Birotteau was able to recover from the wear and tear of the night's emotions. He lay in a low chair by the fireside; over against him sat his wife, who watched him closely, with a sweet smile on her lips—one of those smiles which prove that women are nearer to the angels than men, in that they can blend infinite tenderness with the most sincere compassion,

a secret known only to the angels whose presence is revealed to us in the dreams providentially scattered at long intervals in the course of human life. Césarine, sitting on a footstool at her mother's feet, now and again bent her head over her father's hands and brushed them lightly with her hair, as if by this caress she would fain communicate through the sense of touch the thoughts which at such a time are importunate when rendered by articulate speech.

Pillerault, that philosopher prepared for every emergency, sat in his armchair, like the statue of the Chancellor of the Hôpital in the peristyle of the Chamber of Deputies, wearing the same look of intelligence which is stamped on the features of an Egyptian sphinx, and talked in a low voice with Derville. Constance had recommended that the lawyer, whose discretion was above suspicion, should be consulted. With the schedule already drafted in her mind, she laid the situation before Derville; and after an hour's consultation or thereabout, held in the presence of the dozing perfumer, Derville looked at Pillerault and shook his head.

"Madame," said he, with the pitiless coolness of a man of business, "you must file your petition. Suppose that by some means or other you should contrive to meet your bills to-morrow, you must eventually pay at least three thousand francs before you can borrow on the whole of your landed property. To your liabilities, amounting to five hundred and fifty thousand francs, you oppose assets consisting of a very valuable and very promising piece of property which cannot be realized—you must give up in a given time, and it is better, in my opinion, to jump from the window than to roll down the stairs."

"I am of that opinion, too, my child," said Pillerault.

Mme. César and Pillerault both went to the door with Derville.

"Poor father!" said Césarine, rising softly to put a kiss on César's forehead.—"Then could Anselme do nothing?" she asked, when her mother and uncle came in again.

"The ungrateful boy!" cried César. The name had

touched the one sensitive spot in his memory, like the string of a piano resonant to the stroke of the hammer.

Little Popinot, meanwhile, since those words had been hurled at him like an anathema, had not had a moment's peace nor a wink of sleep. The hapless youth called down maledictions on his uncle, and went in search of him. To induce experience and legal acumen to capitulate, young Popinot poured forth all a lover's eloquence, hoping to work on the feelings of a judge, but his words slid over the man of law like water over oilcloth.

"Commercial usage," pleaded Anselme, "permits a sleeping-partner to draw to a certain extent upon his co-associate on account of profits; and in our partnership we ought to put it in practice. After looking into my business all round, I feel sure that I am good to pay forty thousand francs in three months' time. M. César's honesty permits me to feel confident that he will use the forty thousand francs to meet his bills. So, if he fails, the creditors will have no reason to complain of this action on our part. And besides, uncle, I would rather lose forty thousand francs than give up Césarine. At this moment, while I am speaking, she will have heard of my refusal, and I shall be lowered in her eyes. I said that I would give my life for my benefactor! I am in the case of the young sailor who must go to the bottom with his captain, or the soldier who is bound to perish with his general."

"A good heart and a bad man of business; you will not be lowered in *my* eyes," said the judge, grasping his nephew's hand. "I have thought a good deal about this," he continued; "I know that you love Césarine to distraction; I think that you can obey the laws of your heart without breaking the laws of commerce."

"Oh! uncle, if you have found out a way, you will save my honor."

"Lend Birotteau fifty thousand francs on his proprietary interest in your Oil; it has become, as it were, a piece of property; I will draw up the document for you."

Anselme embraced his uncle, went home, made out bills for fifty thousand francs, and ran all the way from the Rue des Cinq-Diamants to the Place Vendôme; so that at the very moment when Césarine, her mother, and Pillerault were gazing at the perfumer, amazed by the sepulchral tone in which the words "Ungrateful boy!" were uttered in answer to the girl's question, the drawing-room door opened, and Popinot appeared.

"My dearly beloved master," he said, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, "here is the thing for which you asked me."

He held out the bills.

"Yes. I have thought carefully over my position; I shall meet them, never fear! Save your honor!"

"I was quite sure of him," cried Césarine, grasping Popinot's hand convulsively.

Mme. César embraced Popinot. The perfumer rose out of his chair, like the righteous at the sound of the last trump; he too was issuing from a tomb. Then with frenzied eagerness he clutched the fifty stamped papers.

"One moment!" cried the stern Uncle Pillerault, snatching up Popinot's bills. "One moment!"

The four persons composing this family group—César and his wife, Césarine and Popinot—bewildered by their uncle's interposition, and by the tone in which he spoke, looked on in terror while he tore the bills to pieces and flung them into the fire, where they blazed up before any one of them could stop him.

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Uncle!"

"Sir!"

There were four voices, and four hearts in one, a formidable unanimity. Uncle Pillerault put an arm round little Popinot, held him tightly to his heart, and put a kiss on his forehead.

"You deserve to be adored by any one who has a heart at all," said he. "If you loved my daughter, and she had

a million, and you had nothing but *that*" (he pointed to the blackened scraps of paper), "you should marry her in a fortnight if she loved you. Your master," indicating César, "is mad.—Now, nephew," Pillerault began gravely, addressing the perfumer, "no more illusions! Business must be carried on with hard coin, and not with sentiments. This is sublime, but it is useless. I have been on 'Change for a couple of hours. No one will give you credit for two farthings; everybody is talking about your disaster; everybody knows that you could not get renewals, that you went to more than one banker, and that they would have nothing to say to you, and all your other follies; it is known that you climbed six pair of stairs to ask a landlord who chatters like a jackdaw to renew a bill for twelve hundred francs; everybody says that you gave a ball to hide your embarrassment. . . . They will say directly that you had no money deposited with Roguin. Roguin is a blind, according to your enemies. One of my friends, commissioned to report everything, has brought confirmation of my suspicions. Every one expects that you will try to put Popinot's bills on the market; in fact, you set him up on purpose to tide you over your difficulties. In short, all the gossip and slander usually set in motion by any man who tries to mount a step in the social scale is going the round of business circles at this moment. You would spend a week in hawking Popinot's bills from place to place, you would meet with humiliating refusals, and nobody would have anything to do with them. There is nothing to show how many of them you are issuing, and people look to see you sacrificing this poor boy to save yourself. You would ruin Popinot's credit in pure waste. Do you know how much the most sanguine bill-discounter would give you for your fifty thousand francs? Twenty thousand; *twenty thousand*, do you understand? There are times in business when you must contrive to hold out for three days without food, as if you had the indigestion, and the fourth brings admission to the pantry of credit. You cannot hold out for the three

days, and therein lies the whole position. Take heart, my poor nephew, you must file your schedule. Here is Popinot, and here am I; as soon as your assistants have gone to bed we will set to work to spare you the misery of it."

"Uncle! . . ." cried the perfumer, clasping his hands.

"César, do you really mean to arrive at a fraudulent bankruptcy with assets *nil?* Your interest in Popinot's business saves your honor."

This last fatal light thrown on his position made it clear to César; he saw the full extent of the hideous truth; he sank down into his low chair, and then on to his knees; his mind wandered, he became a child again. His wife thought the shock had killed him, and knelt to raise him, but she clung close to him when she saw him clasp his hands and raise his eyes; and in spite of the presence of his uncle, his daughter, and Popinot, he began with remorseful resignation to repeat the sublime prayer of the Church on earth:

"Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. *Give us this day our daily bread.* And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

Tears filled Pillerault's stoical eyes, and Césarine stood, white and rigid as marble, with her tear-stained face hidden on Anselme's shoulder. Then the old merchant took the young man's arm, "Let us go downstairs," he said.

At half-past eleven they left César in the care of his wife and daughter. Just at that moment Célestin, who had looked after the business during this storm, came upstairs and opened the drawing-room door. Césarine heard his footsteps, and hurried forward to place herself so as to screen the prostrate master of the house.

"Among this evening's letters," he said, "there was one from Tours, the direction was not clear, it has been delayed. I thought it might be from the master's brother, so I did not open it."

"Father," cried Césarine, "there is a letter from uncle at Tours."

"Ah! I am saved!" exclaimed César. "My brother! my brother!" and he kissed the letter, which ran thus:

François Birotteau to César Birotteau

"Tours, 17*th*.

"My beloved Brother—Your letter has given me the keenest distress; and so when I had read it, I offered up to God on your behalf the holy sacrifice of the mass, praying Him, by the blood shed for us by our Divine Redeemer, to look mercifully upon you in your affliction. And now that I have put up my prayer *pro meo fratre Cæsare*, my eyes are filled with tears to think that by misfortune I am separated from you at a time when you must need the support of a brother's affection. But then I bethought me that the worthy and venerated M. Pillerault will doubtless fill my place. My dear César, in the midst of your troubles, do not forget that this life of ours is a life of trial and a transition state; that one day we shall be rewarded if we have suffered for the holy name of God, for His holy Church, for putting in practice the doctrines of the Gospel, or for leading a virtuous life; if it were not so, the things of this present world would be unintelligible. I repeat these words, though I know how good and pious you are, because it may happen to those who, like you, are tossed by the tempests of this world, and launched upon the perilous seas of human concerns, to be led to blaspheme in their distresses, distracted as they are by pain. Do not curse the men who will wound you, nor God, who mingles bitterness with your life at His will. Look not on the earth, but rather keep your eyes lifted to Heaven; thence comes comfort for the weak, the riches of the poor are there, and the fears of the rich . . ."

"Oh, Birotteau," interrupted his wife, "just miss that out, and see if he is sending us anything."

"We will often read it over," said her husband, drying

his eyes. He opened the letter, and a draft on the Treasury fell out. "I was quite sure of him, poor brother," said Birotteau, picking up the draft.

". . . I went to see Mme. de Listomère," he continued, reading in a voice choked with tears, "and without giving a reason for my request, I begged her to lend me all that she could spare, so as to swell the amount of my savings. Her generosity enables me to make up the sum of a thousand francs, which I send you in the form of a draft by the Receiver-General of Tours upon the Treasury."

"A handsome advance!" said Constance, looking at Césarine.

"By retrenching some superfluities in my way of living, I shall be able to repay Mme. de Listomère the money I have borrowed of her in three years' time; so do not trouble about it, my dear César. I am sending you all that I have in the world, with the wish that the sum may assist you to bring your difficulties to a happy termination; doubtless they are but momentary. I know your delicacy, and wish to anticipate your scruples. Do not dream of paying any interest on the amount, nor of returning it in the day of prosperity, which will dawn for you before long, if God deigns to grant the petitions which I make daily for you. After your last letter, received two years ago, I thought that you were rich, and that I might give my savings to the poor; but now all that I have belongs to you. When you have weathered this passing squall, keep the money for my niece Césarine, so that when she is established in life she may spend it on some trifle which will remind her of an old uncle, whose hands are always raised to Heaven to implore God's blessing upon her, and for all those who shall be dear to her. Bear in mind, in fact, dear César, that I am a poor priest, living by the grace of God, as the wild-birds live in the fields, walking quietly in my own path, striving to keep

the commandments of our divine Saviour, and consequently needing but little. So do not have the least hesitation in your difficult position, and think of me as one who loves you tenderly. Our excellent Abbé Chapeloud (to whom I have not said a word about your strait) knows that I am writing to you, and wishes me to send the most kindly messages to all your family, with wishes for your continued prosperity. May God vouchsafe to preserve you and your wife and daughter in good health; and I pray for patience to you all, and courage in the day of adversity.

"François Birotteau.

"Priest of the Cathedral Church of Tours, and Vicar of the Parish Church of Saint-Gatien."

"A thousand francs!" cried Mme. Birotteau, in vehement anger.

"Lock it up," César said gravely; "it is all he has. Besides, it belongs to our Césarine, and should enable us to live without asking anything of our creditors."

"And then they will believe that you have taken away large sums."

"I shall show them his letter."

"They will say that it is a fraud."

"*Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" cried César, appalled at this; "I have often thought that very thing of poor folk who, no doubt, were just in my position."

Mother and daughter were both too anxious about César to leave him, and they sewed on by his side. There was a deep silence. At two o'clock in the morning the drawing-room door was softly opened, and Popinot beckoned to Mme. César to come downstairs. At the sight of his niece, Uncle Pillerault took off his spectacles.

"There is hope yet, my child," he said; "all is not over; but your husband could not stand the strain of the ups and downs of this business, so Popinot and I will try to arrange it. Do not leave the shop to-morrow, and take down the

names of all the holders of the bills; we have all the day till four o'clock. This is my idea. There is nothing to fear from M. Ragon or from me. Suppose now that Roguin had paid over to the vendors the hundred thousand francs you deposited with him—in that case, you would no more have them than you have them to-day. You have to meet bills to the amount of a hundred and forty thousand francs, payable to Claparon's order; you must pay them anyhow, so it is not Roguin's bankruptcy which is ruining you. Now to meet your liabilities, I see forty thousand francs to be borrowed sooner or later on your factory, and sixty thousand francs in Popinot's bills. So you may struggle through; for once through, you can raise money on that building-land by the Madeleine. If your principal creditor agrees to help you, I shall not consider my fortune; I will sell my *rentes;* I shall be without bread; Popinot will be between life and death; and, as for you, you will be at the mercy of the smallest events. But the Oil will give a good return, no doubt. Popinot and I have been consulting together; we will support you in this struggle. Oh, I will eat my dry bread gayly, if success dawns on the horizon. But everything depends on Gigonnet and on Claparon and his associates. We are going to see Gigonnet between seven and eight, Popinot and I, and then we shall know what to make of their intentions."

Constance, carried away by her feelings, put her arms about her uncle, and could not speak for tears and sobs. Neither Popinot nor Pillerault could know that Bidault, *alias* Gigonnet, and Claparon were but two of du Tillet's doubles, and that du Tillet had set his heart upon reading this terrible paragraph in the "Gazette":

"Decree of the Tribunal of Commerce. M. César Birotteau, wholesale perfumer, of 397 Rue Saint-Honoré, Paris, declared a bankrupt, date provisionally fixed, 16th of January, 1819. Registrar: M. Gobenheim-Keller. Agent: M. Molineux."

Anselme and Pillerault studied César's affairs till daylight came, and at eight o'clock that morning the two heroic comrades, the old veteran and the subaltern of yesterday, neither of whom was destined to experience on his own account the dreadful agony of mind endured by those who go up and down the stairs of Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, betook themselves without a word to the Rue Grenétat. It was a painful time for both of them. More than once Pillerault passed his hand over his forehead.

In the Rue Grenétat multifarious small trades are carried on in every overcrowded house. Every building has a repulsive aspect. The hideousness of these houses has a distinct quality of its own, in which the mean squalor of a poor industrial neighborhood predominates.

Old Gigonnet inhabited the third floor in one of these houses. All the windows, with their dirty square panes of glass, were secured to the frames by pivots, and tilted to admit the air; you walked straight up the staircase from the street, and the porter lived in the box on the mezzanine floor lighted from the staircase. Every one in the house, except Gigonnet, plied some handicraft; workmen came and went all day long. Every step on the stairs, where filth was allowed to accumulate, was plastered over with a coating of mud, hard or soft according to the state of the weather. Each landing on this fetid stair displayed the name of some craftsman painted in gilt letters on a sheet of iron, which was painted red and varnished, and some sample of the man's achievements in his trade. The doors, for the most part, stood ajar affording glimpses of grotesque combinations of industry and domestic life; the sounds which issued thence, snatches of song, yells, whistlings, and uncouth growls recalled the noises heard at the Jardin des Plantes toward four o'clock. The smartest braces for the trade in the *article Paris* were being made in a loathsome den on the first floor; on the second, among heaps of the most unsavory litter, the manufacture of the daintiest cardboard boxes, displayed at the New Year in shop windows, was carried on. Gigonnet,

who was worth eighteen hundred thousand francs, lived and died on the third floor in this house. Nothing would induce him to leave it, although his niece, Mme. Saillard, offered him rooms in a mansion in the Place Royale.

"Courage!" said Pillerault, as he jerked the cord of the lever bell-pull that hung by Gigonnet's neat gray-painted door.

Gigonnet himself opened it, and the perfumer's two champions in the lists of bankruptcy went through a formal, chilly-looking room, with curtainless windows, and entered a second, where all three seated themselves.

The bill-discounter took up his position before a grate full of ashes, in which the wood maintained a stubborn resistance to the flames. The sight of his green cardboard cases, and the monastic austerity of the office, windy as a cave, sent a cold chill through Popinot. His dazed eyes wandered over the pattern of the cheap wall-paper—tricolor flowers on a bluish background—which had been hung some five-and-twenty years back; and turned from that depressing sight to the ornaments on the chimney-piece, a lyre-shaped clock and oval vases, blue Sèvres ware, handsomely mounted in gilt copper. This bit of flotsam, recovered by Gigonnet from the wreck of Versailles, when the palace was sacked by the populace, came from a queen's boudoir, but the magnificent-looking ornaments were flanked by a couple of wrought-iron candlesticks of the commonest description, a harsh contrast which continually reminded the beholder of the manner in which their owner had come by those royal splendors.

"I know that you cannot come on your own account," said Gigonnet, "but for the great Birotteau. Well, what is it, my friends?"

"I know that you have nothing to learn, so we will be brief," said Pillerault. "Have you his bills payable to Claparon."

"Yes."

"Will you exchange the first fifty thousand francs that

will fall due for bills accepted by M. Popinot here, less the discount, of course?"

Gigonnet lifted the terrible green cap, which seemed to have been born with him, and displayed a bald butter-colored pate, then with a Voltairean grin—

"You want to pay me in oil for hair," he remarked, "and what should I do with it?"

"When you joke, it is time for us to take ourselves off," said Pillerault.

"You speak like the sensible man that you are," said Gigonnet, with a flattering smile.

"Very well, and how if I back M. Popinot's bills?" asked Pillerault, making a final effort.

"You are as good as gold ingots, M. Pillerault; but I have no use for gold ingots, all that I want is current coin."

Pillerault and Popinot took their leave and went. Even at the foot of the staircase Popinot's knees still shook under him.

"Is he a man?" he asked of Pillerault.

"People say so," answered the older man. "Keep this little interview always in mind, Anselme! You have seen what money-lending is, stripped of its masquerade and palaver. Some unforeseen event turns the screw upon us, and we are the grapes, and bill-discounters the barrels. This speculation in building-land is a good piece of business no doubt; Gigonnet, or somebody behind him, has a mind to cut César's throat and to step into his shoes. That is all; there is no help for it now. And this is what comes of borrowing money; never resort to it."

It had been a dreadful morning for Mme. Birotteau. For the first time she had taken the addresses of those who came for money, and had sent away the Bank collector without paying him; yet the brave woman was glad to spare her husband these humiliations. Toward eleven o'clock she saw Pillerault and Anselme returning; she had been expecting them with ever-increasing anxiety, and now she read her

doom in their faces. There was no help for it, the schedule must be filed.

"He will die of grief," said the poor wife.

"I could wish that he might," said Pillerault gravely; "but he is so devout that, as things stand, his director the Abbé Loraux alone can save him."

Pillerault, Popinot, and Constance remained below, while one of the assistants went for the Abbé Loraux. The Abbé should prepare Birotteau for the schedule which Célestin was copying out fair for his master's signature. The assistants were in despair; they loved their employer. At four o'clock the good priest came. Constance told him all the details of the calamity which had befallen them, and the Abbé went upstairs like a soldier mounting to the breach.

"I know why you have come," César exclaimed.

"My son," said the priest, "your sentiments of submission to the Divine will have long been known to me, now you are called upon to put them in practice. Keep your eyes fixed ever upon the Cross, contemplate the Cross without ceasing, and think of the cup of humiliation of which the Saviour of men was compelled to drink, think of the anguish of His Passion, and thus you may endure the mortifications sent to you by God—"

"My brother the Abbé has already prepared me," said César, holding out the letter, which he read over again, to his confessor.

"You have a good brother," said M. Loraux, "a virtuous and sweet-natured wife, and a loving daughter, two real friends in your uncle and dear Anselme, two indulgent creditors in the Ragons. All these kind hearts will pour balm into your wounds continually, and will help you to carry your cross. Promise me to bear yourself with a martyr's courage, and to take the blow without wincing."

The Abbé coughed, a signal to Pillerault in the next room.

"My submission is unlimited," said César calmly. "Disgrace has come upon me; I ought only to think of making reparation."

Césarine and the priest were both surprised by poor Birotteau's tone and look. And yet nothing was more natural. Every man bears a definitely known misfortune better than suspense and constant alternations of excessive joy at one moment, followed on the next by the last extremity of anguish.

"I have been dreaming for twenty-two years," he said, "and to-day I wake to find myself staff in hand again." César had once more become the Tourangeau peasant.

At these words Pillerault held his nephew tightly in his arms. César looked up and saw his wife and Célestin, the latter with significant documents in his hands; then he glanced calmly round the group; all the eyes that met his were sad but friendly.

"One moment!" he said, and unfastening his Cross of the Legion of Honor, which he gave to the Abbé Loraux, "you will give that back to me when I can wear it without a blush.—Célestin," he continued, turning to his assistant, "send in my resignation; I am no longer deputy-mayor. M. l'Abbé will dictate the letter to you, date it January 14th, and send Raguet with it to M. de la Billardière."

Célestin and the Abbé Loraux went downstairs. For nearly a quarter of an hour perfect silence prevailed in César's study. Such firmness took the family by surprise. Célestin and the Abbé came back again, and César signed the letter of resignation; but when Pillerault laid the schedule before him, poor Birotteau could not repress a dreadful nervous tremor.

"Oh, God! have mercy upon us!" he said, as he signed the terrible instrument and handed it to Célestin.

Then Anselme Popinot spoke, and a gleam of light crossed his clouded brow. "Monsieur and madame," he said, "will you grant me the honor of mademoiselle's hand?"

This speech brought tears into the eyes of all who heard it; César alone rose to his feet, took Anselme's hand, and said in a hollow voice, but with dry eyes, "My boy, you shall never marry a bankrupt's daughter."

Anselme looked Birotteau steadily in the face.

"Will you promise, sir, in the presence of your whole family, to consent to our marriage, if mademoiselle will take me for her husband, on the day when you shall have paid all your creditors in full?"

There was a moment's pause. Every one felt the influence of the emotion recorded in the perfumer's weary face.

"Yes," he said at last.

Anselme stretched out his hand to Césarine with an indescribable gesture; she gave him hers, and he kissed it.

"Do you also consent?" he asked her.

"Yes," she said.

"So I am really one of the family. I have a right to interest myself in your affairs," was his comment with an enigmatical look.

Anselme hurried away lest he should betray a joy in too great contrast with his master's trouble. Anselme was not exactly delighted with the bankruptcy; but so absolute, so egoistical is love, that Césarine herself in her inmost heart felt a glow of happiness strangely at variance with her bitter distress of mind.

"While we are about it, let us strike every blow at once," said Pillerault, and in Constance's ear.

An involuntary gesture, a sign not of assent, but of sorrow, was Mme. Birotteau's answer.

"What do you mean to do, nephew?" said Pillerault, turning to César.

"To continue the business."

"I am not of that opinion," said Pillerault. "Go into liquidation, let your assets go to your creditors in the shape of dividend, and go out of business altogether. I have often thought what I should do if I were placed in a similar position. (Oh! you must be prepared for everything! The merchant who does not contemplate possible insolvency is like a general who does not lay his account with a defeat; he is only half a merchant.) I myself should never have gone on again. What! Be compelled to blush before men whom

I should have wronged, to endure their suspicious looks and unspoken reproaches? I can think of the guillotine—in one instant all is over; but to carry a head on your shoulders to have it cut off daily is a kind of torture from which I should escape. Plenty of men begin again as though nothing had happened; so much the better for them!—they are braver than Claude-Joseph Pillerault. If you pay your way (and pay ready-money you must), people will say that you managed to save something for yourself; and if you have not a halfpenny, you will never recover. 'Tis good-evening to you. Surrender your assets, let them sell you up, and do something else."

"But what?" asked César.

"Eh! try for a place under the Government," said Pillerault; "you have influence, have you not? There are the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt, Mme. de Mortsauf, M. de Vandenesse! Write to them, go to see them, they will find you some post in the Household, with a thousand crowns or so hanging to it; your wife will earn as much again; your daughter, perhaps, may do the same. The case is not desperate. You three among you will earn something like ten thousand francs a year. In ten years' time, you will be in a position to pay a hundred thousand francs, for you will have no expenses meanwhile; your womankind shall have fifteen hundred francs from me; and, as for you, we shall see."

It was Constance, and not César, who pondered these wise words, and Pillerault went on 'Change. At that time stock-brokers used to congregate in a provisional structure of planks and scaffolding, a large circular room, with an entrance in the Rue Feydeau. The perfumer's failure was already known, and had created a sensation in high commercial circles, for their prevailing politics were Constitutional at that time. Birotteau was a conspicuous personage, and envied by many. Merchants, on the other hand, who leaned toward Liberalism, regarded Birotteau's too celebrated ball as an audacious attempt to trade on their senti-

ments, for the Opposition were fain to monopolize patriotism. Royalists were allowed to love the King, but the love of their country was the exclusive privilege of the Left, the Left was for the people; and those in power had no right to rejoice thus vicariously through the administration, in a national event which the Liberals meant to exploit for their own benefit. For which reasons the fall of a Ministerialist in favor at Court, of an incorrigible Royalist who had insulted Liberty by fighting against the glorious French Revolution on Vendémiaire 13th, set all tongues wagging on 'Change, and was received with applause.

Pillerault wanted to know what was being said, and to study public opinion. He went up to one of the most eager groups; du Tillet, Gobenheim-Keller, Nucingen, old Guillaume and his son-in-law Joseph Lebas, Claparon, Gigonnet, Mongenod, Camusot, Gobseck, Adolphe Keller, Palma, Chiffreville, Matifat, Grindot, and Lourdois were discussing the news.

"Well, well, how careful one had need to be!" said Gobenheim, addressing du Tillet; "my brothers-in-law all but opened an account with Birotteau, it was a near thing."

"I am let in for ten thousand francs myself," said du Tillet; "he came to me a fortnight ago, and I let him have the money on his bare signature. But he obliged me once, and I shall lose it without regret."

"Your nephew is like the rest," said Lourdois, addressing Pillerault. "Gave entertainments. I can imagine that a rogue might try to throw dust in your eyes to induce confidence; but how could a man who passed for the cream of honest folk descend to the stale mountebank's trickery that never fails to catch us?"

"Like leeches," commented Gobseck.

"Only trust a man if he lives in a den like Claparon," said Gigonnet.

"Vell," said the stout Baron Nucingen, for du Tillet's benefit, "you haf dried to blay me a nice drick, sending Pirodot to me. I do not know," he went on, turning to

Gobenheim the manufacturer, "why he did not send rount to me for vifty tousend vrancs; I should haf led him haf dem."

"Oh! not you, M. le Baron," said Joseph Lebas. "You must have known quite well that the Bank had refused his paper; you were on the Discount Committee which declined it. This poor man, for whom I still feel a very great respect, fails under singular circumstances—"

Pillerault grasped Joseph Lebas's hand.

"It is, in fact, impossible to explain how the thing has happened," said Mongenod, "except by the theory that there is some one behind Gigonnet, some banker whose intention it is to spoil the Madeleine speculation."

"The thing which has happened to him always happens to people who go out of their own line," said Claparon, interrupting Mongenod. "If he had brought out his Cephalic Oil himself, instead of sending up the price of building lots in Paris by rushing into land speculation, he would have lost his hundred thousand francs through Roguin, but he would not have gone bankrupt. He will start afresh under the name of Popinot."

"Keep an eye on Popinot." said Gigonnet.

According to this crowd of merchants, Roguin was "poor Roguin"; the perfumer was "that unlucky Birotteau." A great passion seemed to excuse the one, the other appeared the more to blame on account of his pretensions. Gigonnet left the Exchange, and took the Rue Perrin-Gasselin on his way home to the Rue Grenétat. He looked in on Mme. Madou, the dry-fruit saleswoman.

"Well, old lady," said he, with his cruel good-humor, "and how are we getting on in our way of business?"

"Middling," said Mme. Madou respectfully, and she offered the money-lender her only armchair with a friendly officiousness which she had never shown to any one else but the dear departed.

Mother Madou, who would fell a carman with a blow if he were refractory or carried a joke too far, who had not

feared to assist at the storming of the Tuileries on the 10th of October, who railed at her best customers (for that matter, she was capable of heading a deputation of the Dames de la Halle, and speaking to the King himself without a tremor)—Angélique Madou received Gigonnet with the utmost respect. She was helpless in his presence; she winced under his hard eyes. It will be a long while yet before the executioner ceases to be a terror to the people, and Gigonnet was the executioner of the small traders. The man who sets money in circulation is more looked up to in the Great Market than any other power; all other human institutions are as nought compared with him. For them the Commissaire is Justice personified, and with the Commissaire they of the Market become familiar. But the sight of the money-lender intrenched behind his green cardboard cases, of the usurer whom they implore with fear in their hearts, dries up the sources of wit, parches the throat, and abashes the bold eyes; the people grow respectful in his presence.

"Have you come to ask something of me?" said she.

"A mere trifle; be prepared to refund the amount of Birotteau's bills, the old man has gone bankrupt, so all outstanding claims must be sent in; I shall send you in a statement to-morrow."

The pupils of Mme. Madou's eyes first contracted like the eyes of a cat, then flames leaped forth from them.

"O the beggar! O the scamp! and he came here himself to tell me that he was deputy-mayor, piling on his lies! The Lord ha' mercy! That's just the way with business; there is no trusting mayors nowadays; the Government cheats us! You wait, I will have the money out of them, I will—"

"Eh! every one comes out of this sort of thing the best way he can, my little dear!" said Gigonnet, lifting one leg with the precise little gesture of a cat picking its way among puddles, a trick to which he owed his nickname.[1] "Some swells have been let in who mean to get themselves out of the scrape—"

[1] Gigonnet, from *Gigotter*, to kick the legs about.

"Good! good! I will get my hazel-nuts out.—Marie Jeanne! my clogs and my lamb's-wool shawl. Quick! or I will lend you a clout that will warm your cheeks."

"That will make it hot for them yonder up the street," said Gigonnet to himself, as he rubbed his hands. "Du Tillet will be satisfied; there will be a scandal in the Quarter. What that poor devil of a perfumer can have done to him, I don't know; for my own part, I am as sorry for the man as for a dog with a broken paw. He isn't a man; he has no fight in him."

Mme. Madou broke out like an insurrection in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine toward seven o'clock that evening, and swept to the luckless Birotteau's door, which she opened with unnecessary violence, for her walk had had an exciting effect.

"Brood of vermin, I must have my money, I want my money! You give me my money! or I will have sachets and satin gimcracks and fans till I have the worth of my two thousand francs! A mayor robbing the people! Did any one ever see the like! If you don't pay me, I will send him to jail; I will go for the public prosecutor; I will put the whole posse of them on his tracks! I do not stir from here without my money, in fact."

She looked as if she would open the glass door of a cupboard in which expensive goods were kept.

"The Madou is helping herself," said Célestin, speaking in a low voice to his neighbor. The lady overheard the remark, for during a paroxysm of rage the senses are either deadened, or preternaturally alert, according to the temperament. She bestowed on Célestin the most vigorous box on the ear ever given and received in a perfumer's shop.

"Learn to respect women, my cherub," quoth she, "and not to bedraggle the names of the people you rob."

Mme. Birotteau came forward from the back shop. Her husband by chance was also there; in spite of Pillerault, he chose to remain, carrying his humility and obedience to the law so far as to be ready to submit to be put in prison.

"Madame," said Constance, "for Heaven's sake, do not bring a crowd together in the street."

"Eh! let them come in," cried the saleswoman; "I will tell them about it; it will make them laugh! Yes, my goods and the francs I made by the sweat of my brow go for you to give balls. You go dressed like a queen of France, forsooth, and fleece poor lambs like me for the wool! *Jésus!* stolen goods would burn *my* shoulders, I know! I have nothing but shoddy on my carcass, but it is my own! Bandits and thieves! my money, or—" She pounced upon a pretty inlaid case full of costly perfumery.

"Leave it alone, madame," said César, appearing on the scene; "nothing here belongs to me, it is all the property of my creditors. I have nothing left but myself; and if you have a mind to seize me and put me in jail, I give you my word of honor" (a tear overflowed his eyes at this) "that I will wait here for your process-server, police-officer, and bailiff's men." From his tone and gesture, he evidently meant to do as he said; Mme. Madou's anger died down.

"A notary has absconded with my money, and the disasters which I cause come through no fault of mine," César went on; "but in time you shall be paid, if I have to work myself to death and earn the money by my hands as a market-porter."

"Come, you are a good man," said the market woman. "Excuse my speaking, madame; but I shall have to fling myself into the river, for Gigonnet will be down upon me, and I have nothing but bills at ten months to give for your cursed paper."

"Come round and see me to-morrow morning," said Pillerault, coming forward; "I will arrange the business for you at five per cent with a friend of mine."

"*Quein!* that is good Father Pillerault!—Why, yes, he is your uncle," she went on, turning to Constance. "Come, now, you are honest folk; I shall not lose anything, shall I? —Good-by till to-morrow, old Brutus," she added, for the benefit of the retired ironmonger.

César insisted on remaining amid the ruins of his glory, and would hear of no other course; he said that by so doing he could explain his position to all his creditors. In this determination, Uncle Pillerault upheld César in spite of the entreaties of his niece. César was persuaded to go upstairs, and then the wily old man hurried to M. Haudry, put César's case before him, obtained a prescription for a sleeping-draught, had it made up, and went back to spend the evening in his nephew's house. With Césarine's assistance, he constrained César to drink as they did; the narcoctic did its work; and fourteen hours later Birotteau awoke to find himself in Pillerault's own bedroom in the Rue des Bourdonnais, a prisoner in the house of his uncle, who slept on a camp bedstead put up in the sitting-room.

When Pillerault had put César into the cab, and Constance had heard it roll away, then her courage failed her. Our strength is often called forth by the necessity of sustaining some one weaker than ourselves; and the poor woman, now that she was left alone with her daughter, wept as she would have wept for César if he had been lying dead.

"Mamma," said Césarine, seating herself on her mother's knee, with the gracious kitten-like ways that women only display for each other, "you said that if I bore my part bravely, you would be able to face adversity. So do not cry, mother dear. I am ready to work in a shop; I will forget what we have been; I will be a forewoman, as you were when you were a girl; you shall never hear a regret or a complaint from me. And I have a hope. Did you not hear M. Popinot?"

"Dear boy! he shall not be my son-in-law."

"Oh! mamma—"

"He will be my own son."

"There is this one good thing about trouble, it teaches us to know our real friends," said Césarine; and, changing places with her mother, she at last comforted her, and soothed the poor woman's grief.

The next morning Constance left a note for the Duc de

Lenoncourt, one of the first Gentlemen of the Bedchamber. She asked for an interview at a certain hour. Meanwhile, she went to M. de la Billardière, told him of the predicament in which César found himself in consequence of Roguin's flight from the country, and begged the mayor to give her his support with the Duke, and to speak for her, for she feared that she might express herself ill. She wanted some post for Birotteau. Birotteau would be the most honest of cashiers, if there are degrees in the quality of honesty.

"The King has just appointed the Comte de Fontaine as Comptroller-General of the Royal Household; there is no time to be lost."

At two o'clock La Billardière and Mme. César ascended the great staircase of the Hôtel de Lenoncourt in the Rue Saint-Dominique, and were brought into the presence of one of the nobles highest in the King's favor, in so far as Louis XVIII. could be said to have preferences. The gracious reception accorded to her by a great noble, one of the little group who formed a connecting link between the eighteenth-century noblesse and those of the nineteenth, put hope into Mme. César. The perfumer's wife was great and simple in her sorrow; sorrow ennobles the most commonplace natures, for it has a grandeur of its own, but only those who are true and sincere can take its polish. Constance was essentially sincere. It was a question of prompt application to the King. In the midst of the discussion, M. de Vandenesse was announced.

"Here is your deliverer," exclaimed the Duke.

Mme. Birotteau was not unknown to the young man, who had been once or twice to the perfumer's shop for those trifles which are often of as much importance as great things. The Duke explained La Billardière's views; and when Vandenesse learned the disasters, he went immediately with La Billardière to see the Comte de Fontaine on behalf of the Marquise d'Uxelles' godson. Mme. Birotteau was asked to await the result.

M. le Comte de Fontaine, like La Billardière, was one of the provincial noblesse, the almost unknown heroes of La Vendée. Birotteau was no stranger to him, for he had seen the perfumer at the Queen of Roses in former days. At that time, those who had shed their blood for the Royalist cause enjoyed privileges, which the King kept secret for fear of hurting Liberal susceptibilities, and M. de Fontaine, one of the King's favorites, was supposed to be in the confidence of Louis XVIII. Not only did this influential person definitely promise to obtain a post for the perfumer, but he went to the Duc de Lenoncourt, then in attendance, to ask him for a moment's speech with the King that evening, and to entreat for La Billardière an audience with Monsieur the King's brother, who had a particular regard for the old Vendean.

That very evening M. le Comte de Fontaine came from the Tuileries to inform Mme. Birotteau that, as soon as her husband had received his discharge, he would be appointed to a post worth two thousand five hundred francs per annum in the Sinking Fund Department, all places in the Household being at that time filled with noble supernumeraries to whom the Royalist family were bound.

This success was but a part of the task undertaken by Mme. Birotteau. The poor woman went to Joseph Lebas at the sign of the Cat and Racket in the Rue Saint-Denis. On the way thither she met Mme. Roguin in her showy carriage, doubtless on a shopping expedition. Their eyes met, and the visible confusion on the beautiful face of the notary's wife, at this meeting with the woman who had been brought to ruin, gave Constance courage.

"Never will I drive in a carriage paid for with other people's money," said she to herself.

Welcomed by Joseph Lebas, she asked him to look for a situation for her daughter in some respectable house of business. Lebas made no promises, but a week later it was arranged that Césarine should be placed in a branch of one of the largest drapery establishments in Paris, which had just

been opened in the Quartier des Italiens. She was to live in the house, and to take charge of the shop and counting-house, with a salary of three thousand francs. She would represent the master and mistress, and the forewoman was to act under her orders.

As for Mme. César herself, she went on the same day to ask Popinot to allow her to take charge of the books, the correspondence, and the household. Popinot knew well that this was the one commercial house in which the perfumer's wife might take a subordinate position and still receive the respect due to her. The noble-hearted boy installed her in his house, gave her a salary of three thousand francs, arranged to give his own room to her, and went up into the attic. And so it came to pass that the beautiful woman, after one short month spent amid novel splendors, was compelled to take up her abode in the poor room where Gaudissart, Anselme, and Finot had inaugurated the Cephalic Oil.

The Tribunal of Commerce had appointed Molineux as agent, and he came to take formal possession of César's property. Constance, with Célestin's help, went through the inventory with him: and then mother and daughter went to stay with Pillerault. They went out on foot, and simply dressed, and without turning their heads, and this was their leave-taking of the house in which they had spent the third part of a lifetime. Silently they walked to the Rue des Bourdonnais, and dined with César, for the first time since their separation. It was a melancholy dinner. They had each had time to think over the position, to weigh the burden laid upon them, to estimate their courage. All three were like sailors, prepared to face the coming tempest without blinking the danger. Birotteau took heart again when he heard that great personages had interested themselves for him and provided for his future; but he broke down when he heard of the arrangement which had been made for his daughter. Then hearing how bravely his wife had begun to work again, he held out his hand to her.

Tears filled Pillerault's eyes for the last time in his life at the sight of this pathetic picture of the father, mother, and daughter united in one embrace; while Birotteau, the most helpless and downcast of the three, held up his hand and cried, "We must hope!"

"To save expense, you must live here with me; you shall have my room, and share my bread. For a long time past I have been tired of living alone; you will take the place of that poor boy I lost. And it will only be a step from here to your office in the Rue d'Oratoire."

"Merciful God!" cried Birotteau. "There is a star to guide me when the storm is at its height."

By resignation to his fate, the victim of a misfortune consumes his misfortune. Birotteau could fall no further; he had accepted the position, he became strong again.

In France when a merchant has filed his petition, the only thing he need trouble himself to do is to retreat to some oasis at home or abroad where he may passively exist like the child that he is in the eye of the law; theoretically he is a minor, and incapable of acting in any capacity as a citizen.[1] Practically, however, he is by no means a nullity. He does not, indeed, show his face until he receives a "certificate of immunity from arrest" (which no registrar nor creditor has been known to refuse), for if he is found at large without it he is liable to be put in prison; but once provided with his safe-conduct, his flag of truce, he can take a stroll through the enemy's camp, not from idle curiosity, but to counteract and thwart the evil intentions of the law with regard to bankrupts.

A prodigious development of perverse ingenuity is the direct result of any law which touches private interests. The one thought of a bankrupt, as of everybody else who finds his purposes crossed in any way by the law of the land, is how to evade it. The period of civil death, during

[1] In France a bankrupt loses his civil and political status; he recovers the right of administering his own affairs after his discharge; but the disabilities are only removed by Rehabilitation. This is an order granted by the Court when it is proved that the bankrupt has paid debts and costs in full.

which time a bankrupt must be considered as a kind of commercial chrysalis, lasts for three months or thereabout, the interval required for the formalities which must be gone through before creditors and debtor sign a treaty of peace, otherwise known as a *concordat*, a word that indicates sufficiently clearly that concord reigns after the storm raised by the clashing of various interests.

Directly the schedule is deposited, the Tribunal of Commerce appoints a registrar to watch over the interests of the throng of unascertained creditors on the one hand, and on the other to protect the bankrupt from the vexatious importunities and inroads of infuriated creditors, a double part which presents magnificent possibilities if registrars had but time to develop them. The registrar authorizes an agent by procuration, to take formal possession of the bankrupt's property, bills, and effects, and the agent checks the statement of assets in the schedule; lastly, the clerk of the court convenes a meeting of creditors, by tuck of drum, that is to say, by advertisements in the newspapers. The creditors, genuine or otherwise, are called upon to assemble and agree among themselves to appoint provisional trustees, who shall replace the agent, step into the bankrupt's shoes, and, by a legal fiction, become indeed the bankrupt himself. These have power to realize everything, to make compromises or to sell outright; in short, to wind up the whole business for the benefit of the creditors, provided that the bankrupt makes no opposition. As a rule, in Paris the bankruptcy is not carried beyond the stage of the provisional trustees, and for the following reasons:

The nomination of trustees is a proceeding calculated to stir up more angry feeling than any other resolution which can be passed by an assembly of men, deluded, baffled, befooled, insnared, bamboozled, robbed, cheated, and thirsting for vengeance; and albeit, as a general thing, the creditor is cheated, robbed, bamboozled, insnared, befooled, baffled, and deluded, in Paris no commercial crisis, no feeling, however high, can last for three mortal months. Nothing in com-

merce but a bill of exchange is capable of starting up clamorous for payment at the expiration of ninety days. Before the three months are out, all the creditors, exhausted by the wear and tear, and worn out by the marches and countermarches of the liquidation, sleep soundly by the side of their excellent little wives. These facts may enable those who are not Frenchmen to understand how it comes to pass that the appointment of provisional trustees is usually final; out of a thousand provisional trustees, there are not five who are appointed to carry the thing further. The reasons of the swift abjuration of commercial enmity which has its source in a failure may be imagined; but for those who have not the good fortune to be merchants, some explanation of the drama known as a bankruptcy is necessary if they are to comprehend how it constitutes the most monstrous legal farce in Paris, and understand the ordinary rule to which César's case was to be so marked an exception.

A failure in business is a thrilling drama in three distinct acts. Act the first may be called The Agent; act the second, The Trustees; and act the Third, The *Concordat*, or payment of composition. The spectacle is twofold, as is the case with plays performed on the stage; for there is the spectacular effect intended for the public, and the more or less invisible mechanism by which the effects are produced, and the same play if seen before and behind the scenes looks quite different from different points of view. In the wings stand the bankrupt and his attorney (one of the advocates who practice at the Tribunal of Commerce), and the trustees and agent and the registrar complete the list.

Nobody outside Paris knows what no Parisian can fail to know, that a registrar is the most extraordinary kind of magistrate which the freaks of civilization have devised. In the first place, he is a judge who, at every moment of his official life, may go in fear that his own measure may be dealt to him again. Paris has even seen the President of her Tribunal of Commerce compelled to file his petition; and the ordinary judge, who is called upon to act as a regis-

trar, is no venerable merchant retired from business, whose magistracy is a tribute to a stainless career; but the active senior partner of some great house. It is a *sine qua non* that a judge who is bound to give decisions on the torrents of commercial disputes which pour incessantly upon the capital shall have as much, or more, business of his own than he can manage.

Thus the Tribunal of Commerce, which might have been a useful transition stage and half-way house between the trading community and the regions of the *noblesse*, is composed of busy merchants, who may one day be made to suffer for unpopular awards, and a Birotteau among them may find a du Tillet.

The judge or registrar, therefore, is of necessity a personage in whose presence a great deal is said to which perforce he lends an ear, thinking the while of his private concerns. He is very apt to leave public business in the hands of the trustees and the attorneys who practice at the Tribunal of Commerce, unless some odd and unusual case turns up; some instance of theft under curious circumstances, to draw from him the remark that either the creditor or the debtor must be a clever fellow. This personage, set on high above the scene, like the portrait of a king in an audience-chamber, is to be seen of a morning from five to seven o'clock in his yard if he is a timber merchant; in his shop, if, like Birotteau, he is a perfumer; and again, in the evening, at dessert after dinner, but always and in any case terribly busy. For these reasons this functionary is usually dumb.

Let us do justice to the law; the registrar's hands are tied by the hasty legislation which provided for these matters; and many a time he sanctions frauds which he is powerless to hinder, as will shortly be seen.

The agent, instead of being the creditors' man, may play into the debtor's hands. Each creditor hopes to swell his share, and in some way to make better terms for himself with the bankrupt, whom every one suspects of a secret hoard. The agent can make something out of both sides,

by dealing leniently with the bankrupt on the one hand, or on the other by securing something for the more influential creditors, and in this way can hold with the hare and run with the hounds. Not infrequently a crafty agent has annulled a judgment by buying out the creditors and releasing the merchant, who springs up again at a rebound like an India-rubber ball.

The agent turns to the best furnished crib; he will, if necessary, cover the largest creditors and let the debtor go bare, or he will sacrifice the creditors to the merchant's future, as suits him best. So the whole drama turns on the first act; and the agent, like the attorney of the Tribunal, is the utility-man in a piece in which neither will play unless he is sure of his fees beforehand. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, the agent is for the debtor.

At the time when this story took place, it was the practice of attorneys at the Tribunal of Commerce to go to the judge who was to act as registrar and nominate a man of their own, some one who knew something of the debtor's affairs and could manage to reconcile the interests of the many and of the one—the honorable trader who had fallen into misfortune. Of late years it has been the practice of shrewd judges to wait till this has been done so as to avoid the nominee, and to make an effort to appoint a man of passable integrity.

During this first act the creditors, genuine or presumed, present themselves to select the provisional trustees, an appointment which, as has been said, is practically final. In this electoral assembly every creditor has a voice, whether his claim is for fifty sous or fifty thousand francs, and the votes are reckoned by count and not by weight. The names of the trustees are proposed at the meeting, packed by the debtor with sham creditors (the only ones who never fail to put in an appearance); and from the names thus sent in, the registrar, the powerless president, is *bound* to choose those who shall act. Naturally, therefore, the registrar takes the trustees from the debtor's hands, another abuse which turns this catastrophe into one of the most burlesque dramas sanc-

tioned by a court of justice. The "honorable trader fallen into misfortune" is master of the situation, and proceeds to carry out a premeditated robbery with the law at his back. In Paris, as a rule, the petty tradesmen are blameless. Before a shopkeeper files his schedule, the poor honest fellow has left no stone unturned; he has sold his wife's shawl, and pawned his spoons and forks; and when he gives in at last, it is with empty hands, he is utterly ruined, and has not even money to pay the attorney, who troubles himself very little about his client.

The law demands that the *concordat*, which remits a part of the debt and restores the debtor to the management of his affairs, should be put to the vote and carried by a sufficient majority, with due regard to the amounts claimed by the voters. To secure the majority is a great feat which demands the most skilful diplomacy on the part of the debtor, his attorney, and the trustees amid the clash of conflicting interests. The ordinary commonplace stratagem consists in offering to such a body of the creditors as will represent the majority required by the law, a premium to be paid over and above the dividend which the meeting of creditors is to consent to accept. For this gigantic swindle there is no remedy. Successive Tribunals of Commerce, familiar with it by dint of practice in non-official capacity, and grown wise by experience, have decided of late that all claims are made void where there is a suspicion of fraud; thus it is to the debtor's interest to complain of the "extortion," and the judges of the Tribunal hope in this way to raise the moral tone of proceedings in liquidation. But they will only succeed in making matters worse; creditors will exercise their ingenuity to invent still more rascally devices which the judges will brand as registrars, and profit by as merchants.

Another extremely popular expedient, which gave rise to the expression "serious and legitimate creditor," consists in creating creditors, much as du Tillet created a firm of bankers. By introducing a sufficient number of Claparons into the meeting, the debtor, in these diverse manifestations,

receives a share of the spoils, and sensibly diminishes the dividends of the real creditors. This plan has a double advantage. The debtor obtains resources for the future, and at the same time secures the proper number of votes representing (to all appearance) a sufficient proportion of the claims upon the estate, the majority necessary for his discharge. These "gay bogus creditors" are like sham electors in the electoral college. What help has the "serious *bonâ-fide* creditor" against his "gay, bogus" compeer? He can rid himself of him by attacking him! Very good. But if the "serious and *bonâ-fide*" creditor means to oust the intruder, he must leave his own business to take care of itself, and he must employ an attorney; and as the said attorney makes little or nothing out of the case, he prefers to "conduct" bankruptcies, and does not take a bit of pettifogging business too seriously. Then, at the outset, before the "gay and bogus" one can be unearthed, a labyrinth of procedure must be entered upon, the bankrupt's books must be gone through to some remote epoch, and application must be made to the Court to require that the books of the pretended creditor shall be likewise produced; the improbability of the fiction must be set forth and clearly proved to the satisfaction of the judges of the Tribunal, and the serious creditor must come and go and plead and arouse interest in the indifferent. This Quixotic performance, moreover, must be gone through afresh in each separate case; and each gay and bogus creditor, if fairly convicted of "gayety," makes his bow to the court with an "Excuse me, there is some mistake; I am very serious indeed." All this is done without prejudice to the rights of the debtor, who may appeal and bring Don Quixote into the Court-Royal. And in the meantime Don Quixote's own affairs go askew, and he too may be compelled to file his schedule.

Moral: Let the debtor choose his trustees, verify the claims, and arrange the amount of composition himself.

Given these conditions, who cannot imagine the underhand schemes, the tricks worthy of Sganarelle, stratagems

that a Frontin might have devised, the lies that would do credit to a Mascarille, the empty wallets of a Scapin, and all the results of these two systems? Any bankruptcy since insolvency came into fashion would supply a writer with material sufficient to fill the fourteen volumes of "Clarissa Harlowe." A single example shall suffice.

The illustrious Gobseck, the master at whose feet the Palmas, Gigonnets, Werbrusts, Kellers, and Nucingens of Paris have sat, once found himself among the creditors of a bankrupt who had managed to swindle him, and whom, on that account, he proposed to handle roughly. Of this person he received bills to fall due *after the discharge* for a sum which (taken together with the dividends received at the time) should pay the amount owing to him (Gobseck) in full. Gobseck, in consequence, recommended that a final dividend of twenty-five per cent be paid. Behold the creditors swindled for Gobseck's benefit! But the merchant had signed the illegal bills in the name of the insolvent firm; and when the time came, a dividend of twenty-five per cent was all that he could be made to pay upon them, and Gobseck, the great Gobseck, received a bare fifty per cent. He always took off his hat with ironical respect when he met that debtor.

As all transactions which take place within ten days before the time when a man files his schedule are open to question, certain prudent prospective bankrupts are careful to break ground early, and to approach some of their creditors, whose interest it is, not less than their own, to arrive at a prompt settlement. Then the more astute creditors will go in search of the simple or of the very busy, paint the failure in the darkest colors, and finally buy up their claims for half their value. When the estate is liquidated, these shrewd folk come by the dividend on their own share, and make fifty, thirty, or twenty-five per cent on the liabilities which they have purchased, and in this way contrive to lose nothing.

After the failure is declared, the house in which a few bags of money yet remain from the pillage is more or less hermetically sealed. Happy the merchant who can effect an

entrance by the window, the roof, the cellar, or a hole in the wall, and secure a bag to swell his share! When things have come to this pass, this Beresina, where the cry of "Each for himself" has been raised, it is hard to say what is illegal or legal, false or true, honest or dishonest. A creditor is thought a clever fellow if he "covers himself"; that is to say, if he secures himself at the expense of the rest. All France once rang with discussion of a prodigious failure, which took place in a certain city where there was a Court-Royal; the magistrates therein being all personally interested in the case, arrayed their shoulders in waterproof cloaks so heavy that the mantle of justice was worn into holes, on which grounds it was necessary to transfer the affair into another court. There was no registrar, no agent, no final judgment possible in the bankrupt's own district.

In Paris these commercial quicksands are so thoroughly well appreciated that every merchant, however much time he may have on his hands, accepts the loss as an uninsured accident; and, unless he is involved for some very large sum, passes the matter to the wrong side of his profit and loss account. He is not so foolish as to waste time over wasted money; he prefers to keep his own pot boiling. As for the little trader, hard put to it to pay his monthly accounts, and tied to the narrow round of his own business, tedious law proceedings, involving a heavy initial outlay, scare him; he gives up the attempt to see through the matter, follows the example of the great merchant, and makes up his mind to his loss. Wholesale merchants do not file their schedule in these days; they liquidate by private arrangement; their creditors take what is offered them, and give a receipt in full; a plan which saves publicity, and the delays of the law, and solicitors' fees, and depreciation of stock consequent on a sudden realization. It is a common belief that it pays better to have a private arrangement than to force the estate into bankruptcy, so private arrangements are more frequent than failures in Paris.

The second act of the drama is intended to prove that a

trustee is incorruptible; that there is not the slightest attempt at collusion between them and the debtor. The audience, who have most of them been at some time cast for the part of trustees themselves, know that a trustee is another name for a creditor whose claims are "covered." He listens, and believes as much as he pleases, till, after three months spent in investigating liabilities and assets, the day comes when composition is offered and accepted. Then the provisional trustees read a little report for the assembled creditors. The following is a general formula:

"GENTLEMEN—The total amount owing to us was one million. We have dismantled our man like a stranded frigate. The sale of old iron, timber, and copper has brought in three hundred thousand francs, the assets therefore amount to thirty per cent of the liabilities. In our joy at finding this sum, when our debtor might have left us a bare hundred thousand francs, we proclaim him to be an Aristides. We vote him crowns and a premium by way of encouragement! We propose to leave him his assets, and to give him ten or a dozen years in which to pay us the dividend of fifty per cent, which he condescends to promise us. Here is the *concordat*, walk up to the desk, and put your names to it!"

At these words the happy creditors fall on each other's neck and congratulate one another. When the *concordat* has been ratified by the Tribunal, the merchant's assets are put at his disposition, and he begins business again as if nothing had happened. He is at liberty to fail once more over the payment of the promised dividends—a sort of great-grandchild of a failure.

If the *concordat* is not accepted, the creditors forthwith make a final appointment of trustees. They resort to extreme measures, and band themselves together to exploit the debtor's property and business; they lay their hands on everything he has or may have, his reversionary rights in the property of father and mother, uncles and aunts, and the like. This is a desperate remedy found by a "union of the creditors."

If a man fails in business, therefore, there are two ways

open to him; by the first method, he takes things into his own hands, and means to recover himself; in the second, having fallen into the water, he is content to go to the bottom. Pillerault knew the difference well. He was of Ragon's opinion, that it was as hard to issue from the first experience with clean hands as to emerge from the second a wealthy man. He counselled surrender at discretion, and betook himself to the most upright attorney on 'Change, asking him to conduct the liquidation, and to put the proceeds at the disposition of the creditors. The law requires that the creditors should make an allowance for the support of the debtor and his family while the drama is in progress. Pillerault gave notice that he himself would maintain his niece and nephew.

Du Tillet had planned everything with a view to prolonging the agony of his old master's failure, and in the following manner. Time is so valuable in Paris, that, though there are usually two trustees appointed, one only acts in the case; the other is nominated for form's sake; he approves the proceedings, like the second notary in a notarial deed; and the active trustee as often as not leaves the work to the attorney employed by the bankrupt. By these means a failure of the first kind is conducted so vigorously that everything is patched up, fixed, settled, and arranged during the minimum time required by the legal procedure. In a hundred days the registrar might repeat the cold-blooded epigram of the Minister who announced that "Order reigns in Warsaw."

Du Tillet meant to make an end of César, commercially speaking. So the names of the trustees appointed through his influence had an ominous sound for Pillerault. M. Bidault, otherwise Gigonnet, the principal creditor, was to do nothing. Molineux, the fidgety little old person who had lost nothing, was to do everything. Du Tillet had thrown this noble corpse of a business to the little jackal to worry before he devoured it.

Little Molineux went home after the meeting of creditors at which the trustees were appointed, "honored" (so he put it) "by the suffrages of his fellow-citizens," and as happy in

the prospect of domineering over Birotteau as an urchin who has an insect to torment. The owner of house-property, being a stickler for the law, bought a copy of the "Code of Commerce," and asked du Tillet to give him the benefit of his lights. Luckily, Joseph Lebas, forewarned by Pillerault, had, at the outset, obtained a sagacious and benevolent registrar, and Gobenheim-Keller (on whom du Tillet had fixed his choice) was replaced by M. Camusot, an assistant judge, and Pillerault's landlord, a Liberal, and a rich silk merchant, spoken of as an honorable man.

One of the most dreadful scenes in César's life was his enforced conference with little Molineux; the creature whom he had looked upon as such a nullity was now, by a legal fiction, become César Birotteau. There was no help for it; so, accompanied by his uncle, he climbed the six pair of stairs in the Cour Batave, reached the old man's dismal room, and confronted his guardian, his *quasi* judge, the man who represented the body of his creditors.

"What is the matter?" Pillerault asked on the stairs, hearing a groan from César.

"Oh! uncle, you do not know what kind of a man this Molineux is."

"I have seen him at the Café David these fifteen years; he plays a game of dominoes there of an evening now and then. That is why I came with you."

Molineux was prodigiously civil to Pillerault, and his manner toward the bankrupt was contemptuously patronizing. The little old man had thought out his course, studied his behavior down to the minutest details, and his ideas were ready prepared.

"What information do you want?" asked Pillerault. "None of the claims are disputed."

"Oh! the claims are all in order," said little Molineux; "they are all verified. The creditors are serious and *bona fide!* But there's the law, sir; there's the law! The bankrupt's expenditure is out of proportion to his means. It appears that the ball—"

"At which you were an invited guest," put in Pillerault.

"Cost nearly sixty thousand francs! At any rate, that amount was spent on the occasion, and the debtor's capital at the time only amounted to a hundred and some odd thousand francs! There is warrant sufficient for bringing the matter before a registrar-extraordinary, as a case of bankruptcy caused by serious mismanagement."

"Is that your opinion?" asked Pillerault, who noticed Birotteau's despondency at those words.

"Sir, the said Birotteau was a municipal officer, that makes a difference—"

"You did not send for us, I suppose, to tell us that the case was to be transferred to a criminal court," said Pillerault. "The whole Café David would laugh this evening at your conduct."

The little old man seemed to stand in some awe of the opinion of the Café David; he gave Pillerault a scared look. He had reckoned upon dealing with Birotteau alone, and had promised himself that he would pose as sovereign lord and Jupiter. He had meant to strike terror into Birotteau's soul by the thunderbolts of a formal indictment, to brandish the axe above his head, to enjoy the spectacle of his anguish and alarm, and then to relent at the prayer of his victim, and send him away with eternal gratitude in his soul. But instead of the insect, he was confronted with this business-like old sphinx.

"There is nothing whatever to laugh at, sir!" said he.

"I beg your pardon," returned Pillerault. "You are consulting M. Claparon pretty freely; you are neglecting the interests of the other creditors to obtain a decision that you have preferential claims. Now I, as a creditor, can intervene. The registrar is there."

"Sir," said Molineux, "I am incorruptible."

"I know you are," said Pillerault; "you are only getting yourself out of the scrape, as the saying is. You are shrewd; you have done as you did in the case of that tenant of yours—"

"Oh! sir, my lawsuit in the matter of the Rue Montorgueil is not decided yet!" cried the trustee, slipping back into the landlord at the word. "A new issue, as they say, has been raised. It is not a subtenancy; he holds direct, and the scamp says now that as he paid his rent a year in advance, and there is only a year to run" (at this point Pillerault gave César a glance which recommended the closest attention to what should follow), "and the year's rent being prepaid, he might clear his furniture out of the premises. So there is a new lawsuit. As a matter of fact, I ought to look after my guarantees until I am paid in full; there may be repairs which the tenant ought to pay for."

"But you cannot distrain except for rent," remarked Pillerault.

"And accessories!" cried Molineux, attacked in the centre. "The article in the Code is interpreted by the light of decisions; there are precedents. The law, however, certainly wants mending in this respect. At this moment I am drafting a petition to his lordship the Keeper of the Seals concerning the hiatus. It would become the Government to consider the interests of owners of property. The State depends upon us, for we bear the brunt of the taxes."

"You are well qualified to enlighten the Government," said Pillerault; "but on what point in this business of ours can we throw any light for you?"

"I want to know," said Molineux, "whether M. Birotteau has received any money from M. Popinot."

"No, sir," answered Birotteau. A discussion followed as to Birotteau's interest in the firm of Popinot, in the course of which it was decided that Popinot had a right to demand the repayment of his advances in full without putting in his claim under the bankruptcy as one of Birotteau's creditors for the half of the expenses of starting his business, which Birotteau ought to have paid. Gradually, under Pillerault's handling, Molineux became more and more civil, a symptom which proved that he set no little store on the opinion of the frequenters of the Café David. Before the interview ended

he was condoling with Birotteau, and asked him no less than Pillerault to share his humble dinner. If the ex-perfumer had gone by himself, he would perhaps have exasperated Molineux, and brought rancor into the business; and now old Pillerault played the part of guardian angel.

One horrible form of torture the law inflicts upon bankrupts; they are bound to appear in person with the provisional trustees and the registrar at the meeting of creditors which decides their fate. For a man who can rise above it, as for the merchant who is seeking his *revanche*, the dismal ceremony is not very formidable; but for any one like César the whole thing is an agony only paralleled by the last day in the condemned cell. Pillerault did all in his power to make that day endurable to his nephew.

Molineux's proceedings, sanctioned by the bankrupt, had been on this wise. The lawsuit concerning the mortgage on the property in the Faubourg du Temple had been gained in the Court of Appeal. The trustees decided to sell the land, and César made no objections. Du Tillet, knowing that the Government meant to construct a canal to open communication between Saint-Denis and the Upper Seine, and that the canal would pass through the Faubourg du Temple, bought César's property for seventy thousand francs. César's rights in the Madeleine building-land were abandoned to M. Claparon, on condition that he on his side should make no demand for half the registration fees, which César should have paid on the completion of the contract; it was arranged that Claparon should take over the land and pay for it, and receive the dividend in the bankruptcy which was due to the vendors.

The perfumer's interest in the firm of Popinot & Company was sold to the said Popinot for forty-eight thousand francs. Célestin Crevel bought the business as a going concern for fifty-seven thousand francs, together with the lease of the premises, the stock, the fittings, the proprietary rights in the Pate des Sultanes and Carminative Toilet Lotion, a twelve years' lease of factory and plant being included in the sale.

The liquid assets reached a total of one hundred and

ninety-five thousand francs, to which the trustees added seventy thousand francs from the liquidation of "that unlucky fellow Roguin." Two hundred and sixty-five thousand francs in all. The liabilities amounted to about four hundred and forty thousand francs, so that there would be a dividend of more than fifty per cent.

A liquidation is something like a chemical process, from which the clever insolvent merchant endeavors to emerge as a saturated solution. Birotteau, distilled entirely in this retort, yielded a result which infuriated du Tillet. Du Tillet thought that there would be a dishonoring bankruptcy, and behold a liquidation highly creditable to his man. He cared very little about the pecuniary gain, for he would have the building-land by the Madeleine without opening his purse; he wished to see the poor merchant disgraced, ruined, and humbled in the dust. The meeting of creditors would doubtless carry out the perfumer in triumph on their shoulders.

As Birotteau's courage returned, his uncle, like a wise physician, gradually told him the details of the proceedings in bankruptcy. These rigorous measures were so many heavy blows. A merchant cannot but feel depressed when the things on which he has spent so much money and so much thought are sold for so little. He was petrified with astonishment at the tidings which Pillerault brought.

"Fifty-seven thousand francs for the Queen of Roses! Why, the stock is worth ten thousand francs! We spent forty thousand francs on the rooms, and the fittings, the plant, the molds and boilers over at the factory cost thirty thousand francs! Why, if the things are sold for half their value, there is the worth of ten thousand francs in the shop, and the Pate des Sultanes and Lotion are as good as a farm!"

Poor ruined César's jeremiads did not alarm Pillerault very much. The old merchant took them much as a horse takes a shower of rain; but when he came to talk of the meeting of creditors, César's gloomy silence frightened him. Those who understand the weakness and vanity of human nature in every social sphere, will understand that for an

ex-judge a return as a bankrupt to the Palais where he had sat was a ghastly form of torture. He must receive his enemies in the very place where he had been so often thanked for his services; he, Birotteau, whose views as to bankruptcy were so well known in Paris, he who had said, "A man who files his schedule is an honest man still, but by the time he comes out of a meeting of creditors he is a rogue." His uncle watched for favorable opportunities, and tried to accustom him to the idea of appearing before his creditors assembled, as the law requires. This condition was killing Birotteau. His dumb resignation made a deep impression on Pillerault, who, through the thin partition wall, used to hear him cry at night. "Never! never! I will die sooner."

Pillerault, so strong himself by reason of his simple life, understood weakness. He made up his mind to spare Birotteau the anguish to which his nephew might succumb, the dreadful and inevitable meeting with his creditors! The law is precise, positive, and unflinching in this respect; the debtor who refuses to appear is liable on these grounds alone to have his case transferred out of the commercial into the criminal court. But if the law compels the appearance of the debtor, it exercises no such constraint upon the creditors.

A meeting of creditors is a mere formality except in certain cases; when, for example, a rogue is to be ousted, or the creditors unite to refuse the dividend offered, or cannot agree among themselves because some of their number are privileged to the prejudice of the rest, or the dividend offered is outrageously small, and the bankrupt is doubtful of obtaining a majority to carry the resolution. But when the estate has been honestly liquidated, or when a rascally debtor has squared everybody, the meeting is only a matter of form. So Pillerault went round to the creditors one after another, and asked each to empower his attorney to represent him on that occasion. Every creditor, du Tillet excepted, was sorry for Birotteau now that he had been brought low. All of them knew how he had behaved, how well his books had been kept, and how straightforward he had been in the mat-

ter. They were well pleased to find not one "gay" creditor among their number. Molineux, as agent in the first place, and afterward as trustee, had found all that the poor man possessed, down to the print of "Hero and Leander" which Popinot had given him. Birotteau had not taken away such small matters as his gold-buckles, his pin, and the two watches, which even an honest man might not have scrupled to keep. This touching obedience to the law made a great sensation in commercial circles. Birotteau's enemies represented these things as conclusive signs of the man's stupidity; but sensible people saw them in their true light, as a magnificent excess of honesty. In two months a change had been brought about in opinion on 'Change. The most indifferent admitted that this failure was one of the greatest curiosities of commerce ever heard of. So when the creditors knew that they were to receive sixty per cent, they agreed to do all that Pillerault asked of them. There are but few attorneys practicing at the Tribunal; so several of the creditors deputed the same man to represent them, and the whole formidable assemblage was reduced to three attorneys, Ragon, the two trustees, and the registrar.

"César, you can go without fear to your meeting to-day; you will find nobody there," Pillerault said on the morning of that memorable day.

M. Ragon wished to go with his debtor. At the sound of the thin elderly voice of the previous owner of the Queen of Roses, all the color left his successor's face; but the kind little old man held out his arms, and Birotteau went to him like a child to his father, and both shed tears. This indulgent goodness put fresh heart into César, and he followed his uncle to the cab.

Punctually at half-past three they arrived in the Cloitre Saint-Merri, where the Tribunal of Commerce then held its sessions. The Salle des Faillites was deserted. The day and the hour had been fixed to that end with the approbation of the trustees and the registrar. The attorneys were there on behalf of their clients; there was nothing to fill

César's soul with dread; and yet the poor man could not enter M. Camusot's room (which had once been his) without deep emotion, and he shuddered as he went through the Salle des Faillites.

"It is cold," said M. Camusot, turning to Birotteau; "these gentlemen will not be sorry to stay here instead of being frozen in the Salle." (He would not say the Salle des Faillites.) "Seat yourselves, gentlemen."

Every one sat down; the registrar put César, still confused, into his own armchair. Then trustees and attorneys signed their names.

"In consideration of the abandonment of your estate," said Camusot, again addressing Birotteau, "your creditors unanimously agree to forego the remainder of their claims; your *concordat* is couched in language which may soften your regrets; your attorney will have it confirmed by the Tribunal at once. So you are discharged. All the judges of the Tribunal have felt sorry that you should be placed in such a position, dear M. Birotteau, without being surprised by your courage," Camusot went on, taking Birotteau's hands, "and there is no one but appreciates your integrity. Through your disasters you have shown yourself worthy of the position which you held here. I have been in business these twenty years, and this is the second time that I have seen a merchant rise in public esteem 'after his failure.' "

Birotteau grasped the registrar's hand and squeezed it. There were tears in his eyes. Camusot asked him what he meant to do, and Birotteau answered that he was going to work, and that he intended to pay his creditors in full.

"If you should be in want of a few thousand francs to carry out your noble design, you will always find them if you come to me," said Camusot; "I would give them with great pleasure to see a thing not often seen in Paris."

Pillerault, Ragon, and Birotteau left the Tribunal.

"Well, was it so bad after all?" said Pillerault, outside.

"I can see your hand in it, uncle," said César, deeply touched.

"And now that you are on your feet again, come and see my nephew," said Ragon; "it is only a step to the Rue des Cinq-Diamants."

It was with a cruel pang that César looked up and saw Constance sitting at her desk in a room on the low dark floor above the shop; dark, for a signboard outside, on which the name "A. Popinot" was painted, cut off one-third of the light from the window.

"Here is one of Alexander's lieutenants," said Birotteau, pointing to the sign with the forced mirth of misfortune.

This constrained gayety, the naive expression of Birotteau's old belief in his superior talents, made Ragon shudder, despite his seventy years. But César's cheerfulness broke down when his wife brought down letters for Popinot to sign, and his face turned white in spite of himself.

"Good-evening, dear," she said, smiling at him.

"I need not ask whether you are comfortable here," César said, and he looked at Popinot.

"I might be in my son's house," she said, and her husband was struck by the tender expression which crossed her face.

Birotteau embraced Popinot, saying, "I have just lost forever the right to call you my son."

"Let us hope," said Popinot. "*Your* Oil is going well, thanks to our efforts in the newspapers, and thanks to Gaudissart, who has been all over, and flooded France with placards and prospectuses. He is having prospectuses in German printed, and is just about to descend on Germany like an invasion. We have orders for three thousand gross."

"Three thousand gross!" echoed César.

"And I have bought some land in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, not badly; a factory is to be built there. I shall keep on at the other place in the Faubourg du Temple."

"With a little help, wife," Birotteau said in Constance's ear, "we shall pull through."

From that memorable day César and his wife and daughter understood one another. Poor clerk, as he was, he had set himself a task which, if not impossible, was gigantic; he

would pay his creditors in full! The three, united by a common bond of fierce independence, grew miserly, and denied themselves everything; every farthing was consecrated to this end. Césarine, with one object in her mind, threw herself into her work with a young girl's devotion. She spent her nights in devising schemes for increasing the prosperity of the house; she invented designs for materials, and brought her inborn business faculties into play. Her employers were obliged to check her ardor for work, and rewarded her with presents, but she declined the ornaments and trinkets which they offered; it was money that she preferred. Every month she took her salary, her little earnings, to her Uncle Pillerault, and César and Mme. Birotteau did the same. All three of them recognized their lack of ability, and shrank from assuming the responsible task of investing their savings. So the uncle went into business again, and studied the money market. At a later time it was known that Jules Desmarets and Joseph Lebas had helped him with their counsel; both had zealously looked for safe investments.

Birotteau, living in his uncle's house, did not even dare to ask any questions about the uses to which the family savings were put. It vexed him that he must wear fine cloth.

"At any rate, I am not eating my creditors' bread," he said, with an angelic glance at the kind old man. "Your bread is sweet" (he went on), "although you give it me out of pity, when I think that, thanks to this sacred charity, I am not robbing my creditors of my earnings."

The merchants who met the Birotteau of those days could not see a trace of the Birotteau whom they used to know. Vast thoughts were awakened in indifferent beholders at sight of that face so dark with the blackest misery, of the man who had never been thoughtful so bowed down beneath the weight of a thought; it was a revelation of the depths, in that this being, dwelling on so ordinary a human level, could have had so far to fall. To the man who would fain be wiped out comes no extinction. Shallow natures who lack a conscience, and are incapable of much feeling, can

never furnish forth the tragedy of man and fate. Religion alone sets its peculiar seal on those who have sounded these depths; they believe in a future and in a Providence; a certain light shines in them, a look of holy resignation, blended with hope, which touches those who behold it; they know all that they have lost, like the exiled angel weeping at the gates of Heaven. A bankrupt cannot show his face on 'Change; and César, thrust out from the society of honest men, was like the angel sighing for pardon.

For fourteen months César refused all amusements; his mind was full of religious thoughts, inspired by his fall. Sure though he was of the Ragons' friendship, it was impossible to induce him to dine with them; nor would he visit the Lebas, nor the Matifats, the Protez and Chiffrevilles, nor even M. Vauquelin.

Constance and Césarine went nowhere. On Sundays and holidays, the only times when they were free, the two women went first to Mass, and then home with César after the service. Pillerault used to ask the Abbé Loraux to come—the Abbé Loraux who had sustained César in his trouble—and they made a family party. The old ironmonger could not but approve his nephew's scruples, his own sense of commercial honor was too keen; and therefore his mind was bent upon increasing the number of people whom the bankrupt might look in the face with a clear brow.

In May, 1821, the efforts of the family thus struggling with adversity were rewarded by a holiday, contrived by the arbiter of their destinies. The first Sunday in that month was the anniversary of the betrothal of César and Constance. Pillerault and the Ragons had taken a little house in the country at Sceaux, and the old ironmonger wanted to make a festival of the house-warming. On the Saturday evening he spoke to his nephew. "We are going into the country to-morrow, César," he said, "and you must come too."

César, who wrote a beautiful hand, copied documents for Derville and other lawyers in the evenings, and on Sundays (with a dispensation from the curé) he worked like a negro.

"No," he answered; "M. Derville is waiting for an account of a guardianship."

"Your wife and daughter deserve a holiday, and there will be no one but the Abbé Loraux, the Ragons, and Popinot and his uncle. Besides, I want you to come."

César and his wife, carried away by the daily round of their busy lives, had never gone back to Sceaux, though from time to time they both had wished to see the garden again, and the lime-tree beneath which César had almost swooned with joy, in the days when he was still an assistant at the Queen of Roses. To-day, when Popinot drove them, and Birotteau sat with Constance and their daughter, his wife's eyes turned to his from time to time, but the look of intelligence in them drew no answering smile from his lips. She whispered a few words in his ear, but a shake of the head was the only response. The sweet expressions of tenderness, unalterable, but now forced somewhat, brought no light into César's eyes; his face grew gloomier, the tears which he had kept back began to fill his eyes. Twenty years ago he had been along this very road, when he was young and prosperous and full of hope, the lover of a girl as lovely as Césarine, who was with them now. Then he had dreamed of happiness to come; to-day he saw his noble child's face, pale with long hours of work, and his brave wife, of whose great beauty there remained such traces as are left to a beautiful city after the lava flood has poured over it. Of all that had been, love alone was left. César's attitude repressed the joy in the girl's heart and in Anselme.

"Be happy, children; you deserve to be happy," said the poor father, in heartrending tones. "You can love each other with no after-thoughts," added he; and as he spoke, he took both his wife's hands in his and kissed them with a reverent, admiring affection which touched her more than the brightest cheerfulness. Pillerault, the Ragons, the Abbé Loraux, and Popinot the elder were all waiting for them at the house; there was an understanding among those five kindly souls, and their manner, and looks, and

words put César at his ease, for it went to their hearts to see him always as if on the morrow of his failure.

"Take a walk in the Bois d'Aulnay," said Pillerault, putting César's hand into his wife's. "Take Anselme and Césarine with you, and come back again at four o'clock."

"Poor things, we are in the way," said Mme. Ragon, touched by her debtor's unfeigned misery; "he will be very happy before long."—"It is a repentance without the sin," said the Abbé Loraux.—"He could only have grown great through misfortune," said the judge.

The power of forgetting is the great secret of strong and creative natures; they forget after the manner of nature, who knows nothing of a past; with every hour she begins afresh the constant mysterious workings of fertility. But weak natures, like Birotteau, take their sorrows into their lives instead of transmuting them into the axioms of experience; and, steeping themselves in their troubles, wear themselves out by reverting daily to the old unhappiness.

When the two couples had found the footpath which leads to the Bois d'Aulnay, set like a crown on one of the loveliest of the low hills about Paris; when the Vallée-aux-Loups lay below them in its enchanting beauty, the bright day, the charm of the view, the fresh green leaves about them, and delicious memories of that fairest day of their youth, relaxed the chords which grief had strung to resonance in César's soul; he held his wife's arm tightly against his beating heart; his eyes were glazed no longer, a glad light shone in them.

"At last I see you again, my dear César," Constance said. "It seems to me that we are behaving well enough to allow ourselves a little pleasure from time to time."

"How can I?" poor Birotteau answered. "Oh! Constance, your love is the one good left to me. I have lost everything, even the confidence that I used to have in myself. I have no heart left in me; I want to live long enough to pay my dues on earth before I die, and that is all. You, dear, who have been wisdom and prudence for me, who saw

things clearly, you who are not to blame, may be glad. Among us three, I am the only guilty one. Eighteen months ago, at that unlucky ball, I saw this Constance of mine, the only woman whom I have loved, more beautiful perhaps than the young girl with whom I wandered along this path twenty years ago, as our children are wandering together now. . . . In less than two years I have blighted that beauty, my pride, and I had a right to be proud of it. I love you more as I know you better. . . . Oh! dearest!" and his tone gave the word an eloquence that went to his wife's heart, "if only I might hear you scold me, instead of soothing my distress."

"I did not think it possible," she said, "that a woman could love her husband more after twenty years of life together."

For a moment César forgot all his troubles at the words that brought such a wealth of happiness to a heart like his. It was with something like joy in his soul that he went toward *their* tree, which by some chance had not been cut down. Husband and wife sat down beneath it, and watched Anselme and Césarine.

"Mademoiselle," Anselme was saying, "do you think me so base and so greedy as to take advantage of the fact that I own your father's interest in the Cephalic Oil? I have carefully set aside his share of the profits; I am keeping them for him. I am adding interest to the money; if there are any doubtful debts, I pass them to my own account. We can only belong to each other when your father has been rehabilitated; I am trying with all the strength that love gives me to bring that day soon."

"And will it come soon?" she asked.

"Very soon," said Popinot.

The tone in which the answer was given was so penetrating, that the innocent and pure-hearted girl held up her forehead for her lover's kiss, fervent and respectful, for Césarine's noble nature had spoken so plainly in the impulse.

"Everything is going well, papa," she said, with the air

of one who knows a great deal. "Be nice, and talk, and don't look so sad any longer."

When these four people, so closely bound together, returned to Pillerault's new house, César, unobservant though he was, felt from the Ragons' altered manner that something was impending. Mme. Ragon was peculiarly gracious; her look and tone said plainly to César, "We are paid."

After dinner the notary of Sceaux appeared. Pillerault asked him to be seated, and glanced at Birotteau, who began to suspect some surprise, though he did not imagine how great it would be. Pillerault began:

"Your savings for eighteen months, nephew, and those of your wife and daughter amount to twenty thousand francs. I received thirty thousand francs in the shape of dividend, so we have fifty thousand francs to divide among your creditors. M. Ragon has received thirty thousand francs as dividend; so this gentleman, who is the notary of Sceaux, is about to hand you a receipt in full for principal and interest, paid to your friends. The rest of the money is with Crottat for Lourdois, old Mme. Madou, the builder, and the carpenter, and the more pressing of your creditors. Next year we shall see. One can go a long way with time and patience." Birotteau's joy cannot be described; he embraced his uncle, and shed tears.

"Let him wear his Cross to-day," said Ragon, addressing the Abbé Loraux, and the confessor fastened the red ribbon to César's buttonhole. A score of times that evening he looked at himself in the mirrors on the walls of the sitting-room with a delight which people who believe themselves to be superior would laugh at; but these good-hearted citizens saw nothing unnatural in it. The next day Birotteau went to see Mme. Madou.

"Oh! is that you!" she cried; "I did not know you, old man, you have grown so gray. Still, the like of you don't come to grief; there are places under Government for you."

"But, madame—"

"Oh, I'm not blaming you; you had your discharge."

"I have come to tell you that I will pay you the balance to-day, at Maitre Crottat's office, and interest also—"

"Really?"

"You must be there at half-past eleven."

"There's honesty for you! good measure, and thirteen to the dozen," cried she, in outspoken admiration. "Stop, sir, I do a good trade with that red-haired youngster of yours; he is a nice young fellow; he lets me make my profit without haggling over the price, so as to make up to me for the loss. Well, then, I will give you the receipt; keep your money, poor old soul! La Madou fires up like tinder, she hollers out, but she has something here," and she tapped the most ample cushion of live flesh ever known in the Great Market.

"Never!" said Birotteau, "the law is explicit; I mean to pay you in full."

"Then there is no need to keep on begging and praying of me. And to-morrow at the Market I will sound your praises; they shall all know about you. Oh! it is a rare joke!"

The worthy man went through the same scene again with the house-painter, Crottat's father-in-law, but with some variations. It was raining. César left his umbrella in a corner by the door, and the well-to-do house-painter, sitting at breakfast with his wife in a handsomely furnished room, saw the stream of water trickle across the floor, and was not too considerate.

"Hallo, poor old Birotteau, what do you want?" he asked, in the tone which people use to a tiresome beggar.

"Has not your son-in-law asked you, sir—"

"What?" Lourdois broke in impatiently. Some request was to follow, he thought.

"To go to his office this morning at half-past eleven, to give me a receipt in full for the balance of your claim?"

"Oh! that is another thing! Just sit you down, M. Birotteau, and take a bite with us—"

"Do us the honor of breakfasting with us," said Mme. Lourdois.—"Doing pretty well?" asked her burly spouse.

"No, sir. I have had to lunch off a roll in my office to

get some money together, but I hope in time to repair the wrong done to my neighbors."

"Really, you are a man of honor," remarked the house-painter, as he swallowed a mouthful of bread and butter and Strasburg pie.—"And what is Mme. Birotteau doing?" asked Mme. Lourdois.

"She is keeping the books in M. Anselme Popinot's counting-house."

"Poor things!" said Mme. Lourdois, in a low voice.

"If you should want me, come and see me, my dear M. Birotteau," began Lourdois; "I might be of use—"

"I want you at eleven o'clock, sir," said Birotteau, and with that he went.

This first result gave Birotteau fresh courage, but it did not give him peace of mind. The desire to redeem his character perturbed him beyond all measure. He completely lost the bloom which used to appear in his face, his eyes grew dull, his cheeks hollow. Old acquaintances who met him at eight o'clock in the morning, or after four in the afternoon on his way to and from the Rue de l'Oratoire, saw a pale-faced, nervous, white-haired man, wearing the same overcoat which he had had at the time of the bankruptcy (for he was as careful of it as a poor sub-lieutenant who economizes his uniform). Sometimes they would stop him in spite of himself, for he was quick-sighted, slinking home, keeping close to the wall like a thief. "People know how you have behaved, my friend," they would say. "Everybody is sorry to see how hardly you live, you and your wife and daughter."

"Take a little more time about it," others would suggest. "A wound in the purse is not mortal."

"No, but a wound in the soul is deadly indeed," the poor feeble César said one day in answer to Matifat.

At the beginning of the year 1823 the Canal Saint-Martin was decided upon, and land in the Faubourg du Temple fetched fabulous prices. The canal would actually pass through the property once César's, now du Tillet's. The

company who had purchased the concession were prepared to pay du Tillet an exorbitant sum for the land if he would put them in possession within a given time, and Popinot's lease was the one obstacle in the way. So du Tillet went to see the druggist in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants.

If Popinot himself regarded du Tillet with indifference, as Césarine's lover he felt an instinctive hatred of the man. He knew nothing of the theft, nor of the disgraceful machinations of the lucky banker, but a voice within him said, "This is a thief who goes unpunished." Popinot had not had the slightest transaction with du Tillet, whose presence was hateful to him, and particularly hateful at that moment when he beheld du Tillet enriched with the spoils of his employer's property, for the building-land at the Madeleine was beginning to command prices which presaged the exorbitant sums which were asked for them in 1827. So when the banker explained the reason of his visit, Popinot looked at him with concentrated indignation. "I do not mean to refuse outright to surrender my lease, but I must have sixty thousand francs for it, and I will not bate a farthing."

"Sixty thousand francs!" cried du Tillet, making as though he would go.

"The lease has fifteen years to run, and it will take another three thousand francs per annum to replace the factory. So, sixty thousand francs, or we will say no more about it," said Popinot, turning into the shop. Du Tillet followed him.

The discussion waxed warm, when Mme. Birotteau, hearing her husband's name pronounced, came downstairs, and saw du Tillet for the first time since the famous ball. He, on his side, could not avoid making a startled gesture at the sight of the change wrought in her face; he was frightened at his work, and lowered his eyes.

"This gentleman is receiving three hundred thousand francs for *your* land," said Popinot, addressing Mme. César, "and he declines to pay *us* sixty thousand francs by way of indemnity for *our* lease—"

"Three thousand francs per annum," said du Tillet, lay-

ing stress on the words.—"*Three thousand francs!*" Madame César repeated the words quietly and significantly.

Du Tillet turned pale; Popinot looked at Mme. Birotteau. There was a pause and a deep silence, which made the scene still more inexplicable to Anselme.

"Sign your surrender," said du Tillet; "I have had the document drafted by Crottat," and he drew a stamped agreement from a side-pocket. "I will give you a draft on the Bank for sixty thousand francs."

Popinot stared at Mme. César with great and unfeigned astonishment; he thought that he was dreaming. While du Tillet was making out his draft at a desk, Mme. César vanished upstairs again. The druggist and the banker exchanged papers, and du Tillet went out with a frigid bow to Popinot.

"At last!" cried Popinot. "Only a few months now, and I shall have my Césarine, thanks to this queer business," and he watched du Tillet turn into the Rue des Lombards, where his cab was waiting for him. "My dear little wife shall not wear herself to death at her work. What! was a look from Mme. César enough? What is there between her and that brigand? It is a very extraordinary thing."

Popinot sent the draft to be cashed at the bank, and went up to speak to Mme. Birotteau; but she was not in the counting-house, doubtless she had gone to her room. Anselme and Constance lived like a mother-in-law and son-in-law when these are on good terms with each other, so he went to Constance's room in all the haste natural in a lover who sees happiness within his grasp.

Great was his astonishment to find his mother-in-law (whom he surprised by springing into the room) reading a letter from du Tillet, for Anselme recognized the handwriting at once. The sight of a lighted candle and black phantom scraps of burned paper on the floor sent a shudder through Popinot, whose long-sighted eyes had involuntarily read the words with which the letter began, "I adore you! You know it, angel of my life, and why—"

"What hold have you on du Tillet to make him conclude

such a bargain as this?" he asked, with the jerky laugh of repressed suspicion.—"Let us not talk of it," she said, and he saw that she was painfully agitated.

"Yes," answered Popinot, quite taken aback, "we must talk of the end of your troubles." Anselme swung round on his heels and drummed on the window-pane, staring out into the yard. "Very well," said he to himself, "and suppose that she loved du Tillet, is that any reason why I should not behave like a man of honor?"

"What is it, my boy?" the poor woman asked.

"The net profits on the Cephalic Oil amount to two hundred and forty-two thousand francs, and the half of two hundred and forty-two is one hundred and twenty-one," said Popinot abruptly. "If I deduct from that sum the forty-eight thousand francs already paid to M. Birotteau, there still remain seventy-three thousand; add to it the sixty thousand just paid for the surrender of the lease, and *you* will have one hundred and thirty-three thousand francs."

Mme. César listened in such glad excitement that Popinot could hear the beating of her heart.

"Well, I have always looked on M. Birotteau as my partner," he continued; "we can employ the money in repaying his creditors. Your savings, twenty-eight thousand francs, in Uncle Pillerault's keeping, will raise the sum to a hundred and sixty-one thousand francs. Uncle will not refuse to give us a receipt for his twenty-five thousand francs. No power on earth can prevent my lending to my father-in-law, on account of next year's profits, enough to pay off the remainder of his creditors. . . . And—he will—be—rehabilitated—"

"Rehabilitated!" cried Mme. César, kneeling before her chair, and, clasping her hands, she repeated a prayer. The letter had slipped from her fingers. She crossed herself. "Dear Anselme!" she said, "dear boy!" She took his face in her hands, kissed him on the forehead, and held him tightly in her arms. "Césarine is yours indeed," she cried. "My daughter will be very happy. She will leave the house where she is working herself to death."

"Through love," said Anselme.

"Yes," smiled the mother.

"Listen to a little secret," said Anselme, looking out of the corner of his eye at the unlucky letter. "I obliged Célestin when he wanted capital to buy your business, but it was on one condition. Your rooms are just as you left them. I had my own idea, but I did not think then that fortune would favor us so greatly. Célestin has undertaken to sublet your old rooms to you; he has not set foot in them, and all the furniture there is yours. I am reserving the second story, so that Césarine and I may live there; she shall never leave you. After we are married, I will spend the day here from eight o'clock in the morning till six in the evening. Then I will buy out M. César's interest in the business for a hundred thousand francs, so that, with his post, you will have ten thousand livres a year. Will you not be happy?"

"Do not say any more or I shall go mad with joy."

Mme. César's angelic bearing, her pure eyes, the innocence on her fair brow, gave the lie so magnificently to the countless thoughts which surged up in the young lover's brain, that he made up his mind to slay the chimeras of his fancy. The sin was irreconcilable with the life and the sentiments of Pillerault's niece.

"My dear adored mother," he began, "a horrible doubt has just crossed my mind. If you would see me happy, you will set it at rest." Popinot held out his hand as he spoke, and took possession of the letter.

"Unintentionally I read the first words in du Tillet's handwriting," he said, alarmed at the consternation in her face. "The words coincide so oddly with the effect you just produced upon the man, who complied at once with my extravagant demands, that anybody would find the explanation which the devil suggests to me in spite of myself. A glance from you, and three words were enough—"

"Stop," said Mme. César, and taking back the letter, she burned it under Anselme's eyes. "I am cruelly punished for a trifling fault, my child. And now you must know all,

Anselme. The suspicion attaching to the mother must not do her daughter an injury, and besides, I may speak without a blush; I could tell my husband this that I am about to tell you. Du Tillet tried to seduce me, my husband was warned at once, and du Tillet was to be dismissed. The very day that my husband was to discharge him du Tillet took three thousand francs."—"I suspected it," said Popinot, with all his hatred of the man in his tone.

"Anselme, your future and your happiness required this confidence, but it must die in your own breast, as it had died in César's and mine. You surely remember the fuss my husband made about the mistake in the books. M. Birotteau, no doubt, put three thousand francs into the safe (the price of the shawl, which was not given to me for three years), so as to avoid ruining the young man by bringing him into a police court. So there you have the explanation of my cry of surprise. Alas, my dear boy, I will confess my childish conduct. Du Tillet had written three love letters to me, letters which showed his nature so plainly that I kept them—as a curiosity. I only read them once; but, after all, it was not wise to keep them. When I saw du Tillet, I thought of them, and went up to my room to burn them. When you came in, I was looking at the last one. That is all, my dear."

Anselme knelt and kissed her hand. The expression in his eyes drew tears of admiring affection from hers.

That day was destined to be a day of joy for César. The King's private secretary, M. de Vandenesse, came to the office to speak with him. They went out together into the little courtyard of the Sinking-Fund Department.

"M. Birotteau," said the Vicomte, "the story of your struggle to pay your creditors came by chance to the King's knowledge. His Majesty was touched by such unusual conduct; and learning that, from motives of humility, you were not wearing the Order of the Legion of Honor, has sent me to command you to resume it. His Majesty also wishes to assist you to discharge your obligations, and has ordered me to pay this amount to you out of his own privy purse, with

regrets that he can do no more for you. Let the matter remain a profound secret, for His Majesty thinks it little becomes a King to make official proclamation of his good actions," and the private secretary paid over six thousand francs to the employé, who heard these words with indescribable emotions.

Birotteau could only stammer inarticulate thanks. Vandenesse smiled, and waved his hand. César's principles are so rarely seen in practice in Paris, that by degrees his life had won admiration. The scale of opinion had already turned in his favor, and people praised him to the skies.

"There goes a man of honor!" The word had reached César's ears several times in the street; he heard them with the sensations of an author who hears his name pronounced. This fair renown disgusted du Tillet. César's first thought on receiving the King's banknotes was of repayment to his ex-assistant. The good man betook himself to the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, and it so fell out that the banker, returning home from business, met him upon the staircase.

"Well, my poor Birotteau," said he, in a caressing tone.

"Poor?" the other cried proudly. "I am very rich. I shall lay my head on the pillow to-night with the satisfaction of knowing that I have paid you."

The words, so full of honesty, put du Tillet for a moment on the rack. Every one respected him, but he had lost his self-respect; a voice which could not be stifled cried within him, "This man is heroic!" But he spoke:

"Pay me! What business can you be in?"

Birotteau felt quite sure that du Tillet would not repeat the story.

"I shall never start in business again, sir. No human power could foresee the thing that befell me. Who knows but that I might be the victim of another Roguin? But my conduct has been put before the King, his heart has deigned to compassionate my struggles, and he has encouraged them by sending me at once a fairly large sum, which—"

"Do you want a receipt in full?" du Tillet cut him short. "Are you paying—"

"In full, and interest besides. So I must beg you to come to M. Crottat's office, a step or two away."

"In the presence of a notary!"

"Why, sir, there is nothing to prevent me from thinking of my rehabilitation, and a document so authenticated is legal evidence—"

"Come, let us go," said du Tillet, and he went out with Birotteau; "it is only a step. But who will find you so much money?" he went on.

"No one finds it for me," said César. "I am earning it by the sweat of my brow."

"You owe an enormous amount to Claparon."

"Alas! yes, that is the heaviest of my debts; I am afraid the effort will be too much for me."

"Oh! you will never be able to pay it all," said du Tillet.

"He is right," thought Birotteau.

He went home again by way of the Rue Saint-Honoré, a piece of inadvertence, for he always went round some other way, that he might not see his shop, nor the windows of his old home. For the first time since his fall, he saw the house where he had spent eighteen happy years, and three months of anguish that effaced those memories.

"I used to count on ending my days there," he said to himself. He quickened his pace at the sight of a new name on the shop front: CÉLESTIN CREVEL, late César Birotteau.

"My eyes dazzle. . . . Is that Césarine?" he cried, thinking that he had seen a golden head at the window.

It was really Césarine whom he saw, and his wife was there, and so was Popinot. The two lovers knew that Birotteau never went past his old home; and it was impossible that they should imagine the great event in the Rue de l'Oratoire, so they had gone to make arrangements for the fete they were planning to give in Birotteau's honor. The strange apparition astonished César so much that he stood stockstill.

"There is M. Birotteau looking at his old house," said M. Molineux to a shopkeeper who lived over against the Queen of Roses.

"Poor man!" returned Birotteau's old neighbor, "he gave one of the grandest balls there—there were two hundred carriages in the street."

"I went to it; he went bankrupt three months afterward, and I was trustee," said Molineux.

Birotteau fled, his legs trembling beneath him, and reached Pillerault's house.

Pillerault knew what was passing in the Rue des Cinq-Diamants, and it seemed to him that his nephew was scarcely fit to bear the shock of a joy so great as his rehabilitation. He had been a daily witness of César's mental sufferings, knew that Birotteau's own stern doctrine as to bankrupts was always in his thoughts, and that he was living up to the very limit of his strength. Dead honor might yet have its Easter Day for him; and it was this hope that gave him no respite from pain. Pillerault undertook to prepare César for the good news; so when he came in, his uncle was thinking how to attain his end. César began to tell the news of the interest that the King had taken in him, his joy seemed to Pillerault to be auspicious, and his amazement that Césarine should be at the window at the sign of the Queen of Roses afforded an excellent opening.

"Well, César," Pillerault began, "do you know what brought it about? Popinot is impatient to marry Césarine. He will not and ought not to be bound any longer by your extravagant ideas of honor, to spend his youth in eating dry bread and smelling a good dinner. Popinot is determined to pay off your creditors in full."

"He is going to buy his wife."

"Isn't it to his credit that he wants to rehabilitate his father-in-law?"

"But questions might be raised, and besides—"

"And besides," cried Uncle Pillerault in feigned anger, "you may sacrifice yourself if you like, but you have no right to sacrifice your daughter."

A lively discusson began, and Pillerault worked himself up. "Eh! If Popinot loaned you nothing," cried he; "if he

had looked upon you as his partner; if he chose to consider the money that he paid over to your creditors for your interest in the Oil as an advance on account of the profits, so that you should not be robbed—"

"It would look as though I had arranged with him to cheat my creditors."

Pillerault pretended to be defeated by this logic. He knew enough of human nature to guess that during the night the good man would argue out the case with himself; and those private reflections of his would accustom him to the idea of rehabilitation.

"But how came my wife and daughter to be in our old house?" he asked at dinner.

"Anselme means to take one of the floors, and he and Césarine will set up housekeeping there. Your wife is on his side. They have had the banns put up without telling you, so as to compel you to give your consent. Popinot says that there will be less merit in marrying Césarine after you are rehabilitated. You accept the King's six thousand francs, and yet you will take nothing from your relatives! Now, for my own part, I am quite justified in giving you a receipt in full; would you refuse it?"

"No," said César. "But it would not hinder me from saving the money to pay you, receipt or no."

"All this is splitting hairs," said Pillerault, "and when honesty is in question, I ought to be allowed to know what is right. What folly were you talking just now? When your creditors are all paid in full, will you still persist that you have cheated them?"

César looked full at Pillerault as he spoke, and it touched the older man to see a bright smile on his nephew's face after three years of dejection.

"You are right," he said, "they would be paid.—But it is like selling my daughter!"

"And I wish to be bought," cried Césarine, who came in with Popinot.

The lovers stealing on tiptoe through the lobby had over-

heard the words. Mme. Birotteau was just behind them. The three had made a round in a cab, asking all the creditors to meet in Crottat's office that evening; Popinot's lover's logic bore down César's scruples; but he still persisted in calling himself a debtor, and would have it that he was outflanking the law by a substitution. Conscience yielded to an outburst from Popinot—

"So you mean to kill your daughter, do you?"

"Kill my daughter!" echoed César, bewildered.

"Well, now," said Popinot, "what is there to prevent me from making a deed of gift in your favor of a sum which on my conscience I believe to be yours? Can you refuse?"

"No," said César.

"Good. Then let us go to Alexandre Crottat this evening, so that there shall be no going back upon it, and our marriage contract can be decided at the same time."

An application for reinstatement and all the necessary certificates were duly deposited by Derville at the office of the Procureur-Général of the Court of Appeal.

During the month which elapsed between the putting up of the banns and the marriage, and during the progress of the formalities, César lived in a state of constant nervous excitement. He was ill at ease. He feared that he might not live to see the great day when his disabilities should be formally removed.

There is something indescribably solemn and imposing in the ceremonial of justice for those who take society seriously. An institution is to men as they consider it, and is invested with dignity and grandeur by their thoughts. When a nation has ceased, not to feel the religious instinct, but to believe; when primary education relaxes the bonds of union by teaching children a habit of merciless analysis, a nation is dissolved; for the only ties that are left to bind men together and make of them one body are the ignoble ties of material interest, and the dictates of the selfish cult created by egoism well carried out. Birotteau, sustained by religion, saw Justice as Justice ought to be regarded among men, as the

expression of society itself; beneath the forms he saw the sovereign will, the laws by which men have agreed to live.

In these days the men who cannot ascend the staircase of the Court of Appeal in the old Palais de Justice in Paris, without feeling deeply stirred, are growing rare; but Birotteau was one of these men. The staircase gives entrance to a vast room, the Salle des Pas-Perdus of this court, beyond which lies the Hall of Audience. Imagine the feeling with which Birotteau (always so much impressed by the circumstance of justice) mounted the staircase among a little crowd of his friends—Lebas, at that time President of the Tribunal of Commerce; Camusot, who had acted as registrar; Ragon, his old master; and the Abbé Loraux, his confessor. The presence of the good priest enhanced these earthly honors by a reflection from heaven, which gave them yet more value in César's eyes.

Pillerault, that practical philosopher, had bethought him of the expedient of dwelling upon and exaggerating the joy of the release, so that the actual experience might not overwhelm César. Just as he finished dressing, he found himself surrounded by faithful friends, all anxious for the honor of accompanying him to the bar of the Court. The delight which suffused the good man's soul at the sight of this group raised him to a pitch of happiness necessary for him if he was to endure the alarming ordeal. He found others of his friends standing in the Great Hall of Audience.

After the cases had been called, Birotteau's attorney made application in a brief formula. At a sign from the President, the Attorney-General rose to give his opinion. In the name of the Court, the Attorney-General, the public accuser, was about to make demand that the merchant's honor, which had been pledged, should be vindicated; a proceeding unique in law, for a condemned man can only be pardoned. Those who have hearts that feel can imagine Birotteau's feelings when M. de Granville spoke somewhat as follows:

"Gentlemen," said the great lawyer, "on the 16th of January, 1820, Birotteau was declared a bankrupt by the

Tribunal of Commerce of the Seine. The insolvency was not occasioned by imprudence on the part of the merchant, nor by dishonest speculation, nor any other cause which could stain his honor. We feel that it is necessary to state it publicly—the calamity was brought about by one of those disasters which occur from time to time, to the great affliction of Justice and of the city of Paris. It was reserved for this present century, in which the evil leaven of subverted morals and revolutionary ideas will long ferment, to behold the Parisian notariat depart from the honorable traditions of its past; there have been more cases of insolvency in that body during the last few years than in two preceding centuries under the ancient monarchy. The greed of gold rapidly acquired has seized upon officials, those guardians of the public welfare and intermediary authorities."

Then followed a tirade based on this text, in the course of which M. le Comte de Granville (speaking in character) took occasion to incriminate Liberals, Bonapartists, and all and sundry who were disaffected, as in duty bound. Events have shown that there was good ground for the Councillor's apprehensions.

"The immediate cause of the plaintiff's ruin was the action of a Paris notary, who absconded with the money which Birotteau deposited with him. The sentence passed by the Court in Roguin's case shows how shamefully he had betrayed his client's trust. A *concordat* followed. We will observe, for the honor of the applicant, that the proceedings were characterized by honesty not to be met with in the scandalous failures which daily occur in Paris. Birotteau's creditors, gentlemen, found every trifle that he possessed, down to trinkets and articles of wearing apparel belonging not only to him, but to his wife, who, to swell the assets, gave up all that she had. Birotteau at this juncture showed himself worthy of the respect which he had won by the discharge of his municipal functions; for he was at that time deputy-mayor of the second arrondissement, and had just received the Cross of the Legion of Honor accorded to the devoted Royalist, who shed his blood for the cause on the steps of Saint-Roch in Vendémiaire; and, no less, to the Consular judge, who had won respect by his ability, and popularity by his conciliatory spirit; to the modest municipal officer, who declined the honors of the mayoralty for himself,

and put forward the name of another as more worthy—the honorable Baron de la Billardière, one of the noble Vendeans whom he had learned to esteem in evil days."

"He put that better than I did," said César in his uncle's ear.

"The creditors, therefore, receiving sixty per cent of their claims, thanks to the upright merchant and his wife and daughter, who surrendered everything that they possessed, gave expression to their respect in the *concordat*, by which they forewent the remainder of their claims in consideration of the dividend. The attention of the Court is called to the manner in which this record is worded."—Here the Attorney-General read the *concordat*.—"After such expressions of goodwill, gentlemen, many a trader would have considered himself free, and would have walked with head erect in public; but so far from considering his liabilities to be discharged, Birotteau would not give way to despair, but made an inward resolution to hasten the coming of a glorious day which here and now dawns for him. Nothing turned him aside from his purpose. Our beloved sovereign gave a post to the man who was wounded at Saint-Roch, and the bankrupt merchant set by the whole of his salary for the benefit of his creditors, for the devotion of his family did not fail him—" Tears came into Birotteau's eyes as he squeezed his uncle's hand.

"His wife and daughter poured their earnings into the common treasury; they too had embraced Birotteau's loyal purpose. They descended from their position to take a subordinate place. Such sacrifices as these, gentlemen, deserve all honor, for they are the hardest of all. This was the task which Birotteau laid upon himself."

The Attorney read an abstract of the schedule, giving the names of the creditors and the balances due to them.

"Every one of these amounts, gentlemen, has been paid (interest included). The receipts have not been given by notes of hand which demand investigation, but by certificates of payment made in the presence of a notary, documents which do not abuse the good faith of the Court, though, nevertheless, the inquiries required by the law have been duly made. You, therefore, restore to Birotteau not his honor, but the civil and political privileges of which he has been deprived, and in so doing you do justice.

Such cases come so seldom before you, that we cannot refrain from giving expression to our admiration of the conduct of the applicant, who has already received the encouragement of august patronage."

With that, he read the formal application. The Court deliberated without retiring, and the President rose to pronounce the decree. "The Court charges me to inform M. Birotteau of the satisfaction with which the decree, granted under such circumstances, is passed.—Call the next case."

Birotteau, already invested with a caftan of honor by the Attorney-General's speech, was struck dumb with joy when he heard these solemn words from the President of the Highest Court of Appeal in France, words which made those who heard them feel that the impassive Themis had a heart. He could not move from his place, he seemed to be glued to the floor, and gazed with bewildered eyes at the Councillors, who seemed to him like angels who had opened the gates which admitted him to life among his fellows. His uncle took him by the arm and drew him away. Then César, who had not obeyed the desire of Louis XVIII., fastened the red ribbon at his buttonhole, like a man in a dream, and went down in triumph with his friends about him to the hackney cab. "Where are you taking me?" he asked of Joseph Lebas, Pillerault, and Ragon.

"Home."

"No. It is three o'clock; I want to go on 'Change again, now that I have the right."

"To the Exchange," Pillerault gave the order, and looked significantly at Lebas, for there were symptoms which made him uneasy; he feared for Birotteau's reason.

So Birotteau went back on 'Change between his uncle and Joseph Lebas; the two merchants whom every one respected linked their arms in his. The news of his rehabilitation was abroad. Du Tillet was the first to see the three and old Ragon, who followed behind.

"Ah! my dear master! Delighted to hear that you have pulled through your difficulties. Perhaps I contributed to

bring about this happy termination by allowing little Popinot to pluck me so easily. I am as glad of your happiness as if it were my own."

"It is the only way open to you," said Pillerault, "for you will never experience it yourself."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked du Tillet.

"A good dig in the ribs, by George," said Lebas, smiling at Pillerault's malicious revenge. He knew nothing of the part that du Tillet had played, but he looked on him as a scoundrel.

Matifat saw César, and immediately all the most respected merchants crowded about the perfumer; he received an ovation on 'Change, the most flattering congratulations and handshakes, which caused here and there some heartburnings, and here and there a pang of remorse, for fifty out of every hundred present had been insolvent at some time or other. Gigonnet and Gobseck, chatting in a corner, stared at César as the learned must have stared when the first electric eel was brought for their inspection, and they beheld that strange curiosity, a living Leyden jar.

Then, still breathing the incense of triumph, César went out to the cab, and drove home to his house, where the marriage contract between his dear child Césarine and the devoted Popinot was to be signed that evening. He laughed nervously, in a way that alarmed his three old friends.

It is one of the mistakes of youth to imagine that every one has the vitality of youth, a defect nearly akin to its best endowment; for youth does not behold life through a pair of spectacles, but through the radiant hues of a reflected glow, and age itself is credited with its own exuberant life. Popinot, like César and Constance, cherished memories of the pomp and splendor of the ball, the strains of Collinet's orchestra had often rung in his ears; he had seen the gay throng of dancers, and tasted the joy so cruelly punished, as Adam and Eve might have thought of the forbidden fruit which banished them from the Garden, and brought Death and Birth into the world.

Popinot, however, could think of that night's festivity not only without remorse, but with joy in his heart, for then it was that Césarine in all her glory had given her promise to him in his poverty. That evening he had known beyond all doubt that he was loved for himself alone. So when he paid Célestin for the rooms which Grindot had restored, and stipulated that everything should be left untouched; when he had carefully seen that the merest trifles belonging to César and Constance were in their place, he had dreamed of giving a ball there on the day of his wedding. The preparations for the fête had been a work of love. It should be exactly like the previous one. The guests were almost the same. The Abbé Loraux took the place of the Grand-Chancellor. Lebas, the President of the Tribunal of Commerce, was to be there. Popinot added M. Camusot's name to the list, as an acknowledgment of the kindness he had shown to Birotteau in so many ways. M. de Vandenesse and M. de Fontaine took the place of M. and Mme. Roguin.

Césarine and Popinot had exercised their discretion in the matter of invitations to the ball. They both shrank from making a festival of their wedding, and had avoided the publicity which jars on pure and tender hearts by giving the dance on the occasion of the signing of the contract. Constance had found the cherry-colored velvet dress in which she had shone for the brief space of a single day; and Césarine had pleased herself by surprising Popinot in the ball-dress of which he had talked so often. So the house was to wear the same air of an enchanted festival, and neither Constance, nor Césarine, nor Anselme thought that there was any danger for César in this joyful surprise.

After the hero of the hour had passed through the indescribable emotions of returning to the Exchange, a fresh shock awaited him in the Rue Saint-Honoré. As he came up the stairs, which still looked new, he saw his wife in the cherry-colored velvet dress; he saw Césarine, the Comte de Fontaine, the Vicomte de Vandenesse, the Baron de la Billardière, and the great Vauquelin; a light film

spread over his eyes, and Uncle Pillerault, on whose arm he leaned, felt the shudder that ran through his nephew.

"It is too much for him," the old philosopher said to the enamored Anselme; "he will not stand all the wine which you have poured out for him."

But all hearts beat so high with joy that César's emotion and tottering steps were ascribed to an intoxication, very natural, as they thought—but not seldom fatal. When he looked round the drawing-room, and saw it filled with guests and women in ball toilets, the sublime rhythm of the *finale* of Beethoven's great symphony beat in his pulses and flooded his brain. That imaginary music streamed in on him like rays of light, sparkling from modulation to modulation; it was to be indeed the *finale* that rang clear and high through the recesses of the tired brain. Overcome by the harmony that swept through him, he laid his hand on his wife's arm, and in tones rendered almost inaudible by the effort to keep back the flowing blood which filled his mouth: "I am not well," he said. Constance, in alarm, led her husband to her room; he was barely able to reach the armchair, into which he sank, exclaiming, "M. Haudry! M. Loraux!"

The Abbé came in, followed by the guests and women in evening dress, who stood in consternation. César in the midst of this brightly-colored throng grasped his confessor's hand, and laid his head on the breast of the wife who knelt beside him. A blood-vessel had been ruptured in the lungs, and the resulting aneurism was stopping his last breath.

"Behold the death of the righteous!" the Abbé Loraux said solemnly, as he stretched his hand toward César with one of those Divine gestures which Rembrandt's inspiration beheld and recorded in his picture of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead.

Christ bade Earth surrender her prey; the good priest sped a soul to heaven, where the martyr to commercial integrity should receive an unfading palm.

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